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School Libraries in Botswana: A State-of-the-Art Report

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Since attaining independence in 1966, Botswana has made vast strides in its development. However, its library services, especially to education, have not kept pace with this general development. Some factors hindering the development of school library services include lack of qualified staff, low funding levels, and divided administrative responsibility for libraries. There is reason for optimism, however, in the support for libraries and for resource-based learning in the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education and in the activism of the Botswana Library Association and of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Library Services to Education.

Introduction

Botswana is a vast, landlocked country in Southern Africa covering 581,730 sq km of the Great African Plateau. It is bordered by South Africa in the south, Zambia in the northeast, Namibia in the west and northwest, and Zimbabwe in the east. Two thirds of the country is made up of the Kalahari Desert, which is the fifth largest desert in the world. Botswana is 1,000m above sea level and is very dry, especially in winter when the temperatures can fall well below zero in places. It is a semi-arid region with erratic and unreliable rainfall. A large percentage of Botswana (the people of Botswana) live in rural areas, although urban migration is on the increase. The economy is largely dependent on the export of beef and diamonds. Botswana has one of the highest per-capita incomes in Africa, and its capital, Gaborone, is regarded as the fastest growing capital city in the world. English is the official language of Botswana, and Setswana is the national language. Before independence was attained in 1966, Botswana was an economically poor and sparsely populated British territory called the Bechuanaland Protectorate. At the last census in 1993, the population, which was 600,000 in 1966, had grown to 1.3 million. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita rose from P40.00 in 1966 to P4,900.00 in 1996, a growth rate of about 12% annually. A series of national development plans since 1967 have placed emphasis on sectors such as mining, education, health, and education. The growth in education has been phenomenal. In 1994 alone, four new senior schools were built (there were only 23 until then), and between 1994 and 1997, 40 new community junior secondary schools have been built. At independence in 1966, fewer than 50% of all primary age pupils were in school. Today it is nearer 95%.

General Education

Botswana has 629 schools at the primary level, 205 community junior secondary schools, and 27 senior schools. In addition, there are six colleges of education affiliated with the University of Botswana, which awards their diplomas and certificates. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for most of the educational sector, except primary schools where this responsibility is shared with the Ministry of Local Government Lands and Housing. For the primary level, the Ministry of Education provides personnel, transport, curriculum, and direction, and the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing is responsible for buildings, furniture, books, and transportation. The junior and senior secondary schools fall under the Ministry of Education's Department of Secondary Education. The Curriculum Development and Evaluation Unit of the MOE is responsible for developing text books, syllabi, and examinations. The Department of Teaching Service Management is responsible for personnel, administration, and staff deployment. The Department of Teacher Training and Development is responsible for preservice and inservice development of teachers. Although the Ministry of Education is responsible for the infrastructure and the funding of education, the National Library Service provides the professional supervision for school libraries and all other libraries in the country.

Two major commissions on education have made major impacts on education and school libraries in Botswana. The report of the first commission, *Education for Kagisano* (Ministry of Education, 1977) recommended that school librarianship courses be offered at the university, that schools give a lighter teaching load to untrained school librarians, that the Ministry of Education consider the establishment of a library assistant post parallel to that of laboratory assistants, and that the Ministry create a school library coordinator post and work toward the establishment of full-time librarian posts in all secondary schools. This Commission's work set into motion events that became major landmarks in school library development. These included the transfer of nine posts from the Ministry of Education to the National Library Service, six of which went to staff secondary school libraries and three to staff teacher training colleges. A 10th post was transferred by the Ministry of Education to the National Library Service for the recruitment of a coordinator of school libraries. Unfortunately, this shifted the position from an educational position to a cultural position, a situation from which school libraries in Botswana are yet to move away.

The Revised National Policy on Education (National Assembly, 1994) is the second of the two major educational policies. Its section on libraries is the result of efforts from concerned individuals and organizations, in particular, the Botswana Library Association (BLA). The BLA submitted a strong petition, and it is partly to its credit that Recommendation 14 of the *Revised National Policy* of 1994 lists a library and resource center among facilities that should be standard for every primary school. *The Revised National Policy*,

Recommendation 48, states that all senior secondary schools should be staffed by qualified librarians, and all community junior secondary schools by trained teacher-librarians who should have the Certificate in School Librarianship over and above their teaching qualification. It further states that there should be rationalization of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and National Library Service to improve the running of educational libraries. It proposes that the Ministry of Education set up a library service of its own in cooperation with National Library Service, with appropriate staffing to provide guidance from an educational as well as a library point of view on the development of library services in the educational institutions, with an officer appointed to coordinate school library services. The policy further calls for accelerating the training of librarians and teacher-librarians to ensure that adequate and skilled personnel are in place for these libraries. One other major relevant recommendation of the Commission was that the long-recommended revision of the junior secondary school curriculum be speedily implemented. This led to the implementation in early 1996 of the three-year student-centered, resource-based curriculum, which has such a bearing on library services.

Together, the two sets of recommendations of 1977 and 1994 and the revised curriculum have the potential to revolutionize educational libraries in the country. There are currently several task forces in place to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the *Revised National Education Policy*. Also, several workshops have addressed the issue of integration of the school library into the curriculum.

History of School Library Development

Missionary reading rooms were organized by missions such as the Christian Mission Society. The books were mostly used by the Africans because they were not allowed the privilege of using the same libraries as Europeans. Missionary endeavor was also instrumental in developing academic institutions of different levels. The London Missionary Society in the early 1840s established the first secondary schools in Botswana (Dale, 1971). Some of these schools, such as St. Joseph's Secondary School founded in 1944, had book collections. Beginning in the 1930s, book box services were set up, variously sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Society, the Carnegie Trust, and the Department of Education. This involved library books being taken in boxes to potential users, mostly pupils and students. Efforts were made to include as much vernacular material as possible. By the 1950s, the book box services had failed (Baffour-Awuah, 1994).

However, the need for libraries had taken root in people's minds, and they kept up the pressure on the colonial government until 1963 when the government of the then Bechuanaland Protectorate approached the British Council for assistance in setting up a small public library in the then proposed new capital, Gaborone. A British Council consultant sent to inves-

tigate the issue recommended that a national library public service be set up in the capital but with branches in some larger towns. The implication was that the recommended service would also look after school and college libraries (Stiles, 1973).

The first Director of the National Library Service, J.S. Parker, arrived in the newly independent Botswana in November 1966 to a discouraging situation. The library building, planned as part of the Civic Center, was incomplete, and the existing buildings were not adequate. What stock he found were mostly donated books. Parker found the school and college libraries

poorly equipped and furnished, stocked with unattractive and haphazard collections, shabby second-hand gifts of books, staffed, if at all, by a succession of voluntary or part-time workers with little or no library training and little or no money with which to maintain their libraries in reasonable condition. (Stiles, 1973, p. 4)

The National Library Service Act, passed in September 1967, required the provision of a good library service nationwide, to promote reading and provide reading material to the general public to increase knowledge, recreation, and self-development. The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) was set up to provide staff and professional support to all kinds of libraries including those in schools and colleges. The Educational Libraries Division of the BNLS was set up specifically to address the educational library needs of the country.

Since its early years, the National Library Service has been concerned with getting educational libraries to the point of near self-sufficiency, but the work has been hampered by staffing difficulties. The problem was on two levels: the staff had little time to devote to running their school or college library on top of a host of other duties, and the staff were untrained and, due to frequent departure of expatriate staff, the little training that did take place was frequently lost.

There was not much funding at the beginning of the National Library Service for the secondary schools. A project memorandum was developed in 1969 by the National Library Service to finance a general stocking of all these libraries, but it was considered too expensive by the Ministry of Finance. However, on the basis of donor funding, including the British Council, the English-speaking Union of America, and the World Council of Churches, the libraries managed to operate.

The Library Board also suggested that the Department of Education should investigate the possibility of promoting school librarianship as a career by making special responsibility allowance to teachers who completed approved inservice courses. The idea of remuneration for the teacher-librarians was not heeded then, and today, almost three decades later, it is still cited in reports from school visits by both Botswana National Library Service and University of Botswana's Department of Library and Informa-

tion Studies that the absence of a responsibility allowance is demotivating for teacher-librarians.

School Library Administration and Management

From the beginning, responsibility for school libraries has been shared by two ministries, a situation that is still hurting Botswana's school library development. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing library structures, stock, and equipment in educational institutions, and the National Library Service is responsible for staffing educational libraries. The National Library Service helps schools to start school libraries, lends books on request, holds training courses for teacher-librarians and students assistants, and provides bibliographies and catalogues to assist teachers in book selection. The National Library Service staff visit schools to inspect libraries and provide advice. However, as a predominantly cultural rather than educational institution, the National Library Service is first and foremost concerned with the development of its public library network. The current Director has stated that the National Library Service cannot continue to carry the load of running and professionally staffing the educational libraries. Although there is no authoritative document delineating the roles of the two actors in the development of educational libraries, one or two workshops have, among other things, addressed the roles of both the Ministry of Education and the National Library Service (Mulindwa & Baffour-Awuah, 1997).

Information Technology

Computer use in Botswana's colleges and secondary schools has so far mostly been in administration. In a few cases, computer laboratories have been set up in some schools for imparting basic skills to staff and students. A government Computer Steering Committee was set up to advise and train students and teachers. Recently, the Internet has become available in educational institutions in Botswana. All the government secondary schools have computers, but most of them are not in the libraries. One school has a computer in the library with full Internet access, mostly because of the dynamism of the Headmaster. Computers are, however, available in almost all the English medium private secondary schools, and almost all these schools also have excellent libraries and Internet access.

School Library Programs

Primary Schools

There are officially no libraries in primary schools, although abundant supplementary readers are provided to the primary schools to ensure that extracurricular reading takes place. In 1997, more than P30 million was spent on these supplementary readers.

The public libraries serve primary schools through their children's service and through extension services such as the book box service, the mobile

library service, and the village reading rooms. The book box service is available to primary schools at least 8 km from the nearest public library. The book boxes provide reference and reading materials, mostly for recreation and entertainment (80-200 books per box). The service had grown to 232 centers in 1997. The National Library Service provides the processed stock through the public libraries for distribution to the service points, and the local councils are supposed to provide the metal boxes for the books and the Central Transport Organization to provide transport. The latter service depends on good will, and this leads to delays. Since 1993, workshops have been organized to equip the teachers in charge with reference service skills as well as basic book box organizational skills.

The mobile library service is another service to primary school libraries. The service began to take books to secondary schools all over the country, as their libraries were not developed. Today, mobile libraries are used for outreach, mostly to primary and junior secondary schools as well as the prisons. The current list of its stopping places in Francistown, for example, shows that its principal users are primary school pupils, although the intention is to serve the general public.

The village reading rooms are a rural library network supporting the public libraries and are intended to provide basic reading material to newly literate people who have completed the Department of Non-formal Education's literacy program. The service is similar to that of the public library. It allows a loan of two books per member for a period of two weeks. It has a reference section as well as a periodical section that may be used only on the premises. Because economics determined that the village reading rooms operate from primary schools, the main users of the service are primary and secondary school pupils.

Some of the primary schools in the urban and semi-urban areas use the public libraries, and others-few-convert their storerooms into "libraries," and others use the mobile libraries. Those primary schools that manage to develop libraries for themselves are generally schools with dynamic parent-teacher associations and equally dynamic headmasters.

Community Junior Secondary Schools

Since the Education Through Partnership program in 1984, all community junior secondary schools (CJSSs) have been built with libraries and the existing CJSSs that did not have libraries have been provided with them as part of a massive upgrading exercise that was begun following the recommendations of the 1977 National Commission on Education. Following the building of libraries in all CJSSs, the question of how to stock them became an issue. That question became one of the assignments of a Working Party set up in 1985 up to look into the situation. The Working Party recommended that the BNLS organize the development of a core list to stock the libraries. Beginning in 1990, a core collection of 1,760 reference and circulation materials was

provided to 71 schools through World Bank funding, to 25 schools through Botswana government funding, and to 64 schools through African Development Bank funding. The last batch of 40 CJSSs received their core collection through an open tender awarded in 1997. This was sponsored directly by the government of Botswana.

There was no formal funding for the CJSS libraries until the Working Party was set up in 1985, and its recommendations led to books and audiovisual materials being introduced into the libraries via the core list. It was agreed that there must be regular funding to replace withdrawn items and to add new stock. In 1986, the sum of P8 (then about £3 Sterling) was allocated per pupil. It was meant only for library books, although in some schools it was used for textbooks and other items. The allocation has since grown from P8 to P12 to P20, and in 1997 it became P30 (about £7.50). The allocation is paid into the school coffers in January each year and is based on the enrollment of a school (Stoneham, 1996).

The massive expansion resulting from this program led to the need for a separate coordinator for community school libraries. A post was created in late 1989, and Mrs. R. Mothlabane, newly graduated from the University of Strathclyde, was appointed to the position. One of her first assignments was to develop a manual for the community junior secondary school libraries. She visited these schools far and wide with the head of the division, Mrs. M. Baffour-Awuah. Visits have become a major part of BNLS supervision strategy for the educational libraries, especially for the CJSSs where there is usually so little professional know how available. These visits involve on-the-job training that ranges from classification to book covering and shelving.

School Librarians/Teacher-Librarians

In the 1980s, the upgrading of libraries in the community junior secondary schools ignited the question of staffing the libraries. Staffing junior and senior secondary school libraries with qualified individuals is a major problem in Botswana. Many staff are still untrained, and many expatriate staff still leave and take their skills with them. Today, even qualified local staff leave with their skills when they are promoted to posts as department heads, which carry allowances. In some cases, there are two or three teacher-librarians in the same school and none actually runs the library, often because they are responsible for other areas of the curriculum for which remuneration is paid. The problem of lack of incentives is compounded by the fact that the Teaching Service Management transfers teachers without considering their librarianship qualification. This means that training is often wasted.

Training programs for teacher-librarianship began at the University of Botswana (UB) in 1988 and at Molepolole and Tonota Colleges of Education in 1990. The University of Botswana has to date trained about 127 teacher-librarians (Stoneham, 1996). The course involves a certificate in school

librarianship program, and is spread over two years, running from May to August each year. It is offered to teachers with at least two years of work experience. On successful completion, they are required to put theory into practice by setting up a school library where none has existed, or developing what is already in place. However, all these teachers will have full teaching loads, some as many as 36 periods a week.

Workshops have been held for head teachers and the officials of the Ministry of Education, aimed at making them more aware of their role in the provision of an educational library in the education process as well as what role they could play in the delivery of the services.

Standards: Professional Standards and/or Legislation

The absence of standards guiding a national vision on educational library developments has prevented the libraries from developing uniformly. For example, in the 1970s, the BNLS attempted to set standards for library collection size (e.g., 5,000 volumes minimum for up to 400 pupils, 12,000 volumes minimum for a school with 1,000 pupils), but nothing much seems to resulted from this effort. The shortage of staff in most libraries can only be remedied if a policy is in place to address the situation. The issue of standards has cropped up in various fora from time to time, but to date there has never been a set of officially accepted standards for school libraries, although good practice material is compiled annually by the Department of Secondary Education and distributed to all CJSS libraries.

Recently, however, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Library Services to Education has been working on developing a comprehensive educational libraries policy for Botswana. The Committee began this work in April 1996 with a two-day seminar on library services to education. It brought together most of the stakeholders involved in the delivery of library services to education (i.e., the National Library Service, Department of Secondary Education, Teaching Service Management, and Ministry of Local Government Lands and Housing). The seminar looked at the role of the two principals, the Ministry of Education, and the National Library, and it also addressed the issues of standards and policy. Its recommendations have been submitted to the Ministry of Education. One recommendation is for a desk officer in the Ministry of Education who will oversee library issues. This is in line with the *Revised National Policy*. A task force on libraries is currently trying to come up with an implementation program.

Professional Support

The Botswana Library Association (BLA) was formed in 1977 to bring together librarians from all types of libraries. The BLA has lobbied the government for improvements in library provision. For example, it petitioned the government for the establishment of libraries in primary schools. An Educational Libraries Committee was formed in 1995, which applied to the Botswana

National Library for recognition as an association, but instead was recognized as a subcommittee under the BLA umbrella. This Educational Libraries Subcommittee has addressed the issue of standards and hopes to marshall the teacher-librarians into its camp to provide leadership. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Library Services to Education also has advocated in many issues. For example, it supported a move to get Tonota and Molepolole Training Colleges to resume the school librarianship program that had been taught as an optional program in 1992 and 1993 and then dropped. The committee was involved in drawing up the syllabus for the program. This committee had its roots in a Working Party set up to implement a government policy to provide all CJSSs with libraries. It also worked on the proposal that led to the beginning of the program for the training of teacher-librarians. The Working Party was set up by the National Library Service and the Ministry of Education. It finished its work in 1989, but never completely disbanded, and in 1992, the ad hoc group was formally transformed into the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Library Services to Education. The Committee has been meeting three times a year and sometimes more frequently when the need arises.

Current State of School Libraries in Botswana

A survey was carried out by the writer in 1997 of educational libraries in Botswana. Some of the findings of this survey are reported here.

Preschool

Fifteen preschool institutions in Gaborone, the capital, were surveyed. There was no library building for any of the preschools. Most were privately run, and all but one wanted library corners rather than libraries, seeing library rooms as an extra expense. Funding is obviously a deterrent factor at preschool level to the provision of libraries. All 10 preschools had reading material. Five out of 10 had good library corners. Five had cupboards of books ranging from 30 to over 500. There were also some audio- and videotapes and games and toys. Two had put the books in all the classrooms. Two had storerooms full of books. One had metal boxes of books much like those used in the National Library's book box service to primary schools and, as in the book box service, the boxes were taken from classroom to classroom. Pupils could read the books at school and play the games in the classrooms, but in most cases they could not be borrowed and taken home.

Primary Schools

Only one primary school of the 14 that responded to the survey of the 23 public primary schools in Gaborone had a library building. Eight of the responding schools, without prompting, indicated their need for libraries. Although this is only 53% of the respondents, it is still an indication of awareness of the need to have and use libraries as support to the educational

system. The bookshelf or library corner found in the preschools was also found in some primary classrooms, but in most of the primary schools the library corner was only a table in the corner of the classroom with between 20 and 50 books displayed for each class. The pupils were free to read the books in the library corners and play the games in the classrooms where there were games, but in most cases they were not allowed to take them home. In a few schools the books had a school property stamp. In two cases the respondents wanted the mobile library to visit, perhaps an indication that it was the variety of stock offered by the mobile library that was attractive, rather than the library building per se; or perhaps they saw the possibility that the mobile library could visit immediately, whereas building the library would take time.

Community Junior Secondary Schools

There are 205 community junior secondary schools in Botswana. All have library buildings, although not all had been provided with library books. In a survey of 50 of these schools, 29 responded to the question regarding book collection size. The average number of library books available was 1,349 and the average number of pupils was 396, for an average of three books per pupil. Although this is far below the number suggested by the draft standards for secondary schools for students in the 11-16 age group, it is in excess of the goal of one book per person set by the first director of the National Library Service in 1967 when library provision was one book to 11 people (Parker, 1969).

Senior Schools

All of the 27 senior schools in Botswana have libraries, but only 13 have library staff with formal library training. Three of the 13 are mission schools, and these employ their own librarians. The other 10 with library staff have them on secondment from the National Library Service. All 13 are full-time school librarians. They are not trained teachers, so they do not teach. At the senior schools, the average number of pupils per school was 1,167, and the average library book stock was 7,856, an average of seven books per person. This was below the average of 19 books per student suggested by the Botswana Library Association, but much better than the level of book provision in the junior schools.

The Future of the Educational Library System

Notwithstanding the rather negative picture that has emerged, the situation is not all bleak. All senior schools and all CJSSs have libraries, although most of them fall short of what the National Library Service, as the bastion of professionalism, would consider as required levels. In all cases, libraries were predominantly book-based. The need for current journals, videos, and other audiovisual material is crucial.

The situation in the libraries of the senior schools with professional librarians is a relatively better one than that of the community junior secondary schools where all the teachers in charge of libraries are overloaded with teaching periods and extracurricular activities. Although there seemed to be relatively more teacher-librarians provided for the CJSSs, the reality of the situation is that all the paraprofessional library staff in the senior schools are library-based and do not split their time with teaching so that, in terms of effectiveness, the 10 are much more effective in their libraries than the 127 teacher-librarians in the CJSSs. Much of the book stock in senior schools was underused because there was no user education program to guide pupils to alternative sources when they came with requests for specific titles that were not immediately available. The senior schools with professional librarians had relatively better libraries, but were only functioning as appendages rather than the heart or hub that educational libraries should be.

In the CJSSs, the situation is worse. About 60% (127 of 205) of the CJSSs have teacher-librarians, most of whom have full teaching loads. Teacher-librarians are not rewarded for their library training, and most are demotivated. In most of these libraries, book stocks have dwindled instead of growing. Losses of books in terms of money is horrific, and in some schools the funds for library books are used to buy textbooks and sports equipment.

Only one of the primary schools surveyed had a library, but all the ingredients are in place for primary school library development. Most of the primary schools have storerooms bursting at the seams with readers. Workshops for the teachers in charge of the book box service have been run regularly since the National Library Service appointed a training officer in 1988. In these workshops teachers are encouraged to turn the numerous supplementary reading materials that they have in their storerooms into the core collection for their school libraries. These books are supplied by the Department of Local Government in conjunction with the Department of Curriculum and Development on an annual basis to all the primary schools as part of their reading comprehension material.

Conclusion

Libraries tend to be regarded either as storehouses of the cultural heritage of a country and placed in ministries dealing with culture or internal affairs, or they are regarded as educational tools and placed within the Ministry of Education. In Botswana, libraries seem to have be regarded first as cultural institutions and second as educational tools. The poor staffing situation has had repercussions on the library service. The worst of it is the lack of user education and the failure to integrate library use into the curriculum. This means the library is seen as a place for extracurricular activities. The situation sounds like a vicious circle. The librarians understand and appreciate the need for user education and integration, but the librarians have nothing to do with curriculum planning; the library service is in an advisory position and

can suggest some improvements, but does not have the clout to enforce them, whereas on the other hand the school authorities and the untrained teacher-librarians might not appreciate the concept of introducing user education into an already overloaded timetable and only see it as a frustration. Those who have the knowhow do not have the clout, and those who have the clout do not have the knowhow. There is obviously a need for alignment, so that both the clout and know how are on the same side to ensure that effective development can take place.

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