

Experiences of teacher-librarians in the workplace after completion of the school librarianship programme

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The winds of change which have swept through South Africa since the beginning of the 1990s have brought high expectations. In many cases there has been the assumption that every sector of the community has changed for the better. However, this has not always been the case. One such example is that of school library provision and development. The aim of the present study was to shed light on factors affecting the development of school libraries in South Africa, particularly in black schools. To achieve this aim a survey was conducted of teacher-librarians who had completed the school librarianship programme at the Department of Information Studies of the University of Natal between 1991 and 1996. The survey solicited information on their experiences in the work situation after completion of the diploma. The study was backed by a review of international literature on the status of school libraries in general and the reasons behind the indifference which has been accorded the school library situation. The causal factors which have been identified and analysed indicate that the lack of support for the school library is a global phenomenon and not unique to South Africa.

Die winde van verandering wat vanaf die begin van die negentigerjare in Suid-Afrika gewoed het, het hoë verwagtinge meegebring. In baie gevalle is aanvaar dat alle sektore van die gemeenskap verbeter het. Dit is egter noodsaaklik om vas te stel of dit die geval is aldan nie. Die doel van hierdie navorsing is om die faktore wat by die ontwikkeling van skoolbiblioteke in Suid-Afrika betrokke is, veral in die swart onderwys, te ondersoek. Om dié doel te bereik, is 'n opname gemaak onder onderwyser-bibliotekaris wat die skoolbiblioteekprogram tussen 1991 en 1996 by die Departement Inligtingstudies van die Universiteit van Natal voltooi het. Die doel van die ondersoek was om inligting te bekom oor die onderwys-bibliotekaris se ondervindings in die werksituasie ná voltooiing van die diploma. Die ondersoek is gerugsteun deur 'n oorsig van die internasionale literatuur oor die redes vir die onverskilligheid wat teenoor die biblioteeksituasie getoon word. Die oorsake wat geïdentifiseer en ontleed is, wys daarop dat die gebrek aan ondersteuning van die skoolbiblioteek internasionaal 'n probleem is.

Motivation for the study

The lack of libraries generally, and well-run libraries particularly in black schools has been outlined by a number of researchers such as Bawa (1996), Fredericks (1995:45), Krige (1990), Stadler (1993) and Vermeulen (1991). Many teacher-librarians of all races have been, and are still being, trained by various institutions in South Africa. Yet it is difficult to identify well-run school libraries, especially in previously black schools. It has been learnt from past students of teacher-librarianship programmes that there are immense problems in their work situations which work against the development and nurturing of school libraries (Fredericks 1995:47). The aim of the study was to collect data which might illuminate the situations within which teacher-librarians operate, the forces and dynamics which face them in the workplace, and the needs to be addressed for the situation to improve.

It is essential at this point to provide a brief description of the previous departments of education in South Africa. According to Kaniki (1997:3), the Tricameral Parliament which came into effect through the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act of 1983, comprised three chambers to serve all interests including education of three groups. These were the House of Assembly to serve the white population (HOA), the House of Representatives to serve coloureds (HOR) and the House of Delegates to serve Indians (HOD). By the same act of 1983 blacks in the self-governing territories outside the borders of South Africa ran their own education systems

under 'own affairs' (the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture falling under this category). A separate Department of Education and Training (hereafter referred to as DET) administered black education within the borders of South Africa although this was the responsibility of the Minister in the cabinet portfolio attached to the House of Assembly (Kaniki 1997:3).

Literature review

South Africa

The literature review opens with a summary of the evolution of libraries in black schools in South Africa.

Generally, there has been a lack of legislation and/or policy for governing school libraries in South Africa. Bawa (1996), the National Education Policy Investigation, Library and Information Services Research Group (1992) and Olën and Kruger (1995: 149) reported that this lack of policy and widely accepted standards for the provision of school libraries has negatively affected their development throughout South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) (1995:84) noted that this lack of policy for the provision of school library services had resulted in most students being educated without access to resource-based learning. Furthermore, most students left school without having been encouraged to read or to develop their own information skills for lifelong learning, and without the capacity to think critically.

The Bantu Education Act (no. 47 of 1953) made no provision for the training of teacher-librarians, nor for the provision of libraries in black schools. The DET, which was responsible for black education up until 1994, acknowledged the potential role of school libraries only in 1983. The National Education Policy Investigation (1992:10) linked the substantial non-realization of the DET goals which were related to this acknowledgement to, amongst other things, the historical legacy of neglect and discrimination which had caused massive deficiencies in school library provision; finance and other problems of considerable magnitude. It was only in 1990 that a privately funded non-governmental organization (NGO), READ (Read Educate and Develop), initiated a nationwide project investigating school library policy. Since then a number of discussions have been held by various stakeholders, including education specialists, teacher-librarians and their trainers, publishers and school library subject advisors, to formulate a national policy framework for school library standards. A comprehensive discussion document was completed in 1997 (South Africa. Department of Education 1997).

Marginalization of school libraries

In reviewing the relevant literature, a number of reasons have been identified as responsible for the poor status of school library provision internationally.

Le Roux (1992:39) identified the marginalization of school libraries as an international sickness. She supported this by quoting Baumbach (1986) on the situation in the United States. Baumbach accused the National Commission on Excellence in Education of not acknowledging the school library media centres nor school library media specialists, as factors in the causes of, or in the solutions to, the problems in education. In California Le Roux (1992:40) referred to Sikola's resentment of the tendency to view school libraries as the neglected stepchild in the educational programme. Gibbs (1989:10), writing about the United Kingdom, claimed that in all the articles which she had consulted concerning the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) she had found only one reference to the library and this was utterly negative. In Zambia, Kakoma (1991:4) reported on how plans for schools did not include library facilities.

Valentine and Nelson (1988:78) concluded that the teaching style used in a school was one of the crucial factors in the poor use of the library and the unacknowledged role of the teacher-librarian. Various authors have confirmed that the outmoded textbook-orientated teaching methodologies which are inappropriate for producing information literate students are responsible for the marginalization of school libraries (Fredericks 1995:47, Karlsson 1996:27, National Education Policy Investigation 1992:14, Reddy 1993:26, Stadler 1992:45, Tawete 1988). Reddy (1993:26), Stadler (1992:45) and Tawete (1988) attributed this marginalization to the education departments' general refusal to acknowledge the centrality of school libraries to the process of teaching and learning. In South Africa this has impacted on the

professional training of black teachers which has taken place without adequately stocked and appropriately staffed libraries (Pholosi 1994:54) and which has failed to stress the importance of reading and equip teachers to involve pupils in the reading process (READ 1993:2). Kakoma (1991:8) had already blamed the Zambian teacher training curriculum which emphasized teacher-based education or 'spoonfeeding' which militated against resource-based learning which is currently being encouraged. Fredericks (1995:47) and Jones (1989:9) maintained that unless the use of library resources and an understanding of the role of the educational librarian become part of initial teacher training, the full potential of both library and librarian will not be realized in education.

The problem of an information illiterate teaching force is reportedly a world-wide phenomenon. Rogers (1994:55) concluded from the results of the Information Handling Skills in Initial Teacher Education project funded by the British Library in 1986, that

'the teaching of study skills, library skills and the handling of information generally were given low priority in many schools and that these deficiencies were at least partly the result of the way teachers were trained'.

This was supported by Flanagan (1992/93:35) who estimated that 25% of African children (in South Africa) were growing up to be illiterate and for this she, justifiably, blamed the way in which the majority of primary school teachers were trained. This information illiteracy in teachers was observed by Radebe (1996:67) in the majority of teachers who registered for the Diploma in School Librarianship.

The marginalization of school libraries manifests itself in a number of ways which are elaborated on below.

Poor status of the teacher-librarian

The inferior professional status accorded teacher-librarians and librarians in general, is responsible for a good measure of this marginalization. Charlton (1985:121) remarked on rhetorical statements overhead at informal gatherings which had overtones of 'what a soft option' running a school library was. Williamson (1989:143) attributed this to the prevailing idea that any intelligent person can run a school library since information is a do-it-yourself field which never has been, and never can be, limited to one person. He further suggested that the situation of school librarianship being in the hands of another more dominant profession, teaching, was responsible for the school library being too frequently regarded as ancillary to the parent (Williamson 1989:144). This was later supported by Sikola's reference (in Le Roux 1992) to the school media centre as 'the neglected stepchild in the educational programme'. Valentine and Nelson (1988:80) stressed the importance of a strong support system for teacher-librarians to the acceptance and development of the librarian's role. Reddy (1993:26) blamed the Australian educational authorities for not, in a number of cases, nurturing an environment where teacher-librarians could be regarded as equal partners with classroom teachers, resulting in the prevalent view that

the library is peripheral to school functioning, and perhaps the viewing of teacher-librarians as 'refugees from the classroom', as noted by Williamson (1989:144).

Reddy (1993:26) commented that despite some improvement in the situation in Australia, the centrality of the school library to the school's educational programme had not been achieved and teacher-librarians generally still had a low profile and status. The role of teacher-librarians was still neither understood nor even accepted by many teachers, principals and administrators (Radebe 1994:46; Reddy 1993:26). Reddy (1993:26) mentioned library literature which accused some teacher-librarians of being just as guilty for this state of affairs by failing to be pro-active within and outside the library profession.

Underutilization of libraries and ignorance regarding their use

Stadler (1992:45) maintained that the school library is currently one of the most abused resources. She referred to numerous instances of the use of school library facilities as staff rooms by teachers. This frustration had been expressed by Charlton (1985:121) when he summarized the regard teachers have of the school library as,

'... ideal for showing TV programmes ... the only place available ... a meeting place for the governors as library tables are useful for meetings, ... lunchtime is the highlight of the library's day, especially when the weather is bad (for anything else but not for reading!), ... the tide of bodies rises as trouble-makers are cast through the library's portals by exasperated duty staff ... the librarian is turned gaoler'.

Fredericks (1995:47) and Stadler (1992:45) complained about heavy teaching loads which prevented teacher-librarians from adequately developing and maintaining library resources and hampered the integration of school libraries with the curriculum.

Principals' attitudes

The American Library Association (1989:9), Dekker (1989:35) and Valentine and Nelson (1988:78) have emphasized the importance of the principal's attitude towards the school library. Valentine and Nelson (1988:78) identified the head's commitment to individualized learning as a vital prerequisite to any development of the role of the library. They acknowledged the correlation between the active support by the school principal of individualized learning, and the successful development of the school library and all it espouses. A principal's negative attitude is likely to negatively affect school libraries. An observation about the situation in South Africa is that school principals generally undervalue school libraries and do not support their establishment (Marais 1996:60; Zaaïman, Roux & Rykheer 1988:180).

Subject teachers' attitudes and perceptions

Braude (1992:88) maintained that generally in South Africa sufficient use was not being made of the school library. Tawete (1988:333, 1991:129) and Olën (1993:35) concurred that the ignorance of, and the wrong perceptions about the role of the school library by subject teachers were some of the major reasons behind the underutilization of media centres in schools. A number of researchers (Braude 1992; Bristow 1992:78; Olën 1993; Valentine & Nelson 1988:53, 55-56) reported the underutilization of existing media centres or ineffective use of their resources in spite of their central role in teaching and learning. Kollasch (1992:68) and Mbambo (1990:11) referred to the self-reinforcing cycle, which clearly characterizes the situation in South Africa, in which teachers-in-training, who have not experienced libraries through their schooling, do not utilize a college library, which remains peripheral to their learning and subsequently to their teaching. Braude (1992:88) and Tawete (1988:333, 1991:129) pointed out the disbelief among educationists that libraries have a value.

Valentine and Nelson (1988:78) concluded that teachers' lack of effective library-use skills and librarians' deficiencies in curricular and educational knowledge were the main hindrances to the development of joint responsibility, between teachers and teacher-librarians, for individualized learning processes.

Recent acknowledgements of the role of the school library in South Africa

The recent acknowledgements in South Africa (even though only in theory so far) of the important central role of school libraries in education are worth mentioning. Stadler (1992:45) suggested that the provision of adequate library facilities needed to be accompanied by

'broad curriculum changes, linked to the transformation of teaching methodologies which would educate South Africans for independent and critical thinking'.

Of importance was the African National Congress' (1995) acknowledgement of the '... central role that information and libraries play in all educational sectors', also warning that without libraries and information services, student-centred and resource-based learning, which liberate students and teachers from authority-centred and textbook-based rote learning, are doomed to failure. The African National Congress (1995:85) has further approved provision of all learners with access to an appropriate library and information service and for information skills to form part of the national core curriculum at all levels of the education and training system. In the outline of the *Outcomes based education* (OBE) to be implemented in 1998, Isaacman (1996) has identified three different categories of outcomes which need to be achieved to make up a credit on the *National qualifications framework*.¹ One of these categories, the *Critical crossfield outcomes* (essential outcomes), includes the ability of learners to

successfully collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information. One of the changes envisaged as a benefit of OBE in the classroom is that learners will know how to collect, gather and organize information and conduct research. How can they learn to do all of the above, especially to conduct research, without library resources? One can interpret this as an acknowledgement of the importance and value of the school library in the fulfilment of the OBE's objectives.

The African National Congress (1994) proposed that by 1999 each school should have basic collections of library material conforming to minimum standards of provision (included in the discussion document which has been circulated for discussion and finalization), as well as (at least) the shared service of a teacher-librarian with administrative support. The proposal is that these services should be consolidated into a centralized resource centre in every school by 2004. In the section on costing school and public libraries the African National Congress (1994) further declared, as a basic educational entitlement,

'access to a well equipped and functional library which is essential in the promotion of resource-based learning and critical thinking ... Because of schooling arrangements such as the structure of the timetable, the library should ideally be physically located at the school for maximum, convenient access that is non-disruptive to the educational programme'.

In terms of training, the African National Congress (1995:86) proposed that all library and information service workers would have access to a defined career path with accredited training programmes linked to a nationally recognized qualifications structure. The discussion document policy for school libraries (South Africa. Department of Education 1997) proposes that each teacher-librarian should have a teaching qualification as well as an additional qualification in school librarianship or an allied library or information studies degree, in accordance with the National qualification framework.

Present situation in response to the foregoing

In spite of this implicit and sometimes explicit acknowledgement of the importance of a school library in education, little is happening on a practical level in the area of school library provision to correspond with this acknowledgement. A number of factors make it difficult to improve the situation. In an attempt to cost school library provision, Bawa (1996:238) based costs on standards which have been accepted by the school library policy group (South Africa. Department of Education 1997). She estimated that R1 500 million would be required to build 2500 school libraries each with an area of 300 square meters at a cost of R1 500 per square meter (according to the KwaZulu Natal Provincial Library and Information Services building norms and costs) with an initial stock of 5 000 basic titles. If only 20% of schools in KwaZulu-Natal alone are reported to have libraries (Schroen in Karlsson, Nassimbeni & Karelse 1996:8), providing

libraries for the needy 80% would indeed be very costly. Without a separate vote for libraries within the KwaZulu Natal provincial budget for education in 1996 (Karlsson 1996:27) as well as in 1997 (Gwala 1997),² to expect a quick solution to the problem of lack of school libraries would seem unrealistic.

An enormous shortage of classrooms has been reported countrywide. For instance, a shortage of 15 000 classrooms was reported in KwaZulu Natal alone in 1995; about 58 600 pupils in Gauteng were without classrooms in 1996; whilst a shortage of 5 000 classrooms was reported in Mpumalanga in 1996 (Sidiropoulos 1997:183). It is a fact that the enormous national backlog of classrooms and the need to provide school access to those children who have not been enrolled at schools in the past will make it difficult for the state to prioritize provision of school libraries (Karlsson, Nassimbeni & Karelse 1996:20).

Variations in the pupil/teacher ratio have been reported, for instance, 24:1 in the Western Cape; 42:1 in the Eastern Cape and 37:1 in KwaZulu Natal (Sidiropoulos 1997:190-191). Worse scenarios have been reported informally, for instance, some teachers and education officials claim to have ratios around and in excess of 70:1 in some black schools. National goals in the area of the pupil/teacher ratios are 40:1 and 35:1 in primary and secondary schools respectively, to be reached by April 2000 (Sidiropoulos 1997:97). These national goals confirm the existence of scenarios worse than is reported. According to Gwala (1997) the rationalization process and the offering of severance packages have exacerbated the problem of unreasonable pupil/teacher ratios.

In spite of the bleakness of the foregoing current situation in South African education, it is still essential to explore ways to improve school library provision and development in South Africa, hence this article.

Survey of teacher-librarians

Methodology

A survey of teacher-librarians was conducted, from September 1996 to the end of March 1997, by means of a mailed questionnaire. The mailing list of the teacher-librarians was generated from the students' records kept in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

The response to the survey was rather poor (38%) in spite of the fact that all the teacher-librarians surveyed were supplied with self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Many were returned only after several follow-up appeals by the researcher. In one case, the researcher's self-addressed and stamped envelope was used by a total stranger to ask the researcher for personal help unrelated to the research.

Population

One hundred and one (101) teacher-librarians of all races, who graduated between 1991 and 1996, were surveyed. Of the 101 surveyed, 11 were from the previously Indian Department of Education and Culture (of whom only *one* responded), two were from the previously coloured Department of Education and Culture (of whom only *one* responded), four were from the previously white Natal Education Department (*none* of whom responded). The rest, 84, were black, 48 from the ex-Department of Education and Training, 36 were from the ex-KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture. Of the 48 blacks, 36 responded. The responses to questions have not been separated according to department of origin of the respondents, because these responses did not show department-related discrepancies. Also, although the respondents were from both primary and high schools, there was no need to separate the responses into two separate categories.

Questionnaire

The questions focussed on the respondents' experiences in their jobs after completion of the diploma and were aimed at establishing, among other things:

- whether or not they had returned to their schools,
- whether or not they were running libraries,
- the education departments' attitude to the establishment of libraries,
- the attitudes of both principals and teachers towards the school library, and
- whether or not their libraries were being used.

The responses would reveal the experiences of teacher-librarians after completion of the diploma, which would confirm or dispute the claim that the situation of school libraries at the schools and attitudes in the Department of Education has not changed much. They would also provide leads as to what needs to be done to support the development and nurturing of school libraries, and to secure an appreciation of the important role of professionally run school libraries in education.

Analysis of data

Twenty six respondents (68%) had returned to their schools after completion of the Diploma, whereas 12 (32%) had changed schools for various reasons such as there being other qualified teacher-librarians at the schools, needing a change from previous schools because of long distances, or taking permanent posts at other schools which were more attractive than the temporary posts they had had at the previous schools.

Of the 38 respondents only 16 (42%) had libraries at their schools, whilst 22 (58%) did not have libraries.

Of those who had libraries at their schools, only 56% had proper library buildings. This included the two respondents who worked for the previously coloured and Indian Departments of Education and Culture schools which had fully functional libraries and whose departments had been involved

in establishing their school libraries and supplying all the materials and other equipment.

Of those who had libraries 69% were running them whilst 31% were not. The 31% who were not running libraries at their schools gave reasons (some vague) for this state of affairs: forced to abandon the libraries as they were overloaded with teaching commitments, letting other people with similar qualifications run the libraries whilst they remained with teaching.

'Teacher-librarians' without libraries

The 58% of respondents who did not have libraries also supplied various reasons (which overlapped in many instances) for not having libraries: in a few cases the building fund was paid by parents and the funds were too meagre to extend to the building of libraries and laboratories, the value of which was, in many cases, not understood; shortage of accommodation was reportedly a hindrance to the establishment of libraries; principals did not see libraries as a priority. One school principal believed that libraries were more suited to high schools than to primary schools.

Education Departments' involvement in library provision

The 42% respondents who had libraries at their schools reported a wide range of similar materials in those libraries, notably to varying levels of supply and variety. Altogether 75% of the respondents claimed that the Departments had not been involved in the library project despite their numerous attempts to get support, whereas 25%, including those employed by the previously coloured Department of Education and Culture and the previously Indian Department of Education and Culture schools with fully functional libraries, acknowledged their Departments' involvement through library subject advisors, even if only by supplying them with the most basic things such as cards, accessions registers, book pockets and slips and a few reference books, magazines, and typewriters.

Principals' attitudes

Of the 38 respondents 15 (39%) claimed that their principals had been supportive of the library in different ways, although in some cases support was only in theory. Twenty three (61%) reported that the principals were definitely not supportive of the library and even vetoed their efforts to introduce the idea to other staff.

The *principal's support* was demonstrated in various ways, such as: library periods being included in the composite school time-table; the librarian being let off teaching to run the library full-time or the teaching load being reduced drastically; a small portion of the school fund allocated to the library every year; motivating teachers and pupils to use the library; supplying the library with stationery; allowing access to the telephone for library purposes; commitment to any improvements to the library such as securing extra shelves,

and in the previously coloured school even wanting to computerize the library.

Working without the principal's support was also felt in various ways: the library being viewed as a waste of staff, money and time; empty promises and no practical commitment; the library being used as a classroom, for meetings, and so on; no understanding of the connection between having a library and the good results with which the principal was obsessed.

Teachers' attitudes and library use

In summary, those teacher-librarians who reported a *positive attitude* from teachers were sending pupils to the library to find more information, for improvement in reading, for projects and assignments, for library lessons and group reading, photocopying or choosing books for private reading and studying.

Teachers' *negative and apathetic attitudes* were evidenced by the viewing of the library as a waste of time and staff, not using the library, very seldom sending learners to the library except to get rid of them or when forced to by the existence of a library period, visiting the library to watch private entertainment videos, ridiculing the teacher-librarian because of the perception that she or he had no work to do, in one case playing table tennis in the library, using it as a place of concealment when they miss classes or coming to the library only to type their own assignments on the computer. Resistance to acknowledging the importance and role of the library was a general problem reported by the majority of respondents.

Teacher-librarians' initiative

Some of the 58% of respondents whose schools did not have libraries had initiated some projects such as starting classroom libraries despite difficulty in controlling books, approaching the READ organization which had supplied them with many useful and interesting books, soliciting donations from the schools where they had done their fieldwork during training as teacher-librarians and encouraging parents and teachers to donate books and magazines. One had arranged with the local municipal library to lend her books for her learners, had negotiated with the Department of Works for a prefabricated building to use as a library and had also approached the South African Reconstruction and Development Programme office and requested them to build a library for them. Altogether 27% of the respondents without libraries felt helpless and, as a result, had not even made a start.

Need for more skills

Although all the respondents felt that they were adequately skilled to start and run their libraries, they needed more skills for dealing with their difficult and unwilling principals and colleagues and for convincing the authorities of the urgency of providing libraries. They needed more recognition for their qualifications and status. Although some felt they were

making headway, they all wished for a *professional body* which would consolidate their objectives and their fight for recognition.

Interpretation

The researcher suggests two reasons for the *poor response to the questionnaire*. The first was the fact that many teacher-librarians had relocated without supplying forwarding addresses. The second one is lack of understanding of the whole process of research and its importance. This is a big problem for which solutions must be found.

Although some respondents had displayed initiative and were making efforts to start library services, an *apathetic attitude* was observed in the study. This was confirmed by Reddy (1993:26) when she accused teacher-librarians of choosing to keep a low profile. One of the reasons given for not running libraries at the schools confirms this apathy, namely choosing to concentrate on teaching rather than agitating for libraries. Altogether 27% of the respondents whose schools did not have libraries had felt helpless and had decided to give up trying for the library – more confirmation of this apathy. Needing a change after completion of the diploma, regardless of whether their newly acquired skills were needed or not at their old schools, is also indicative of apathy.

On the issue of *marginalization* of school libraries, it is evident from the following that school libraries are still being marginalized in South Africa. The fact that 58% of the respondents did not have libraries at their schools; 56% of those who had libraries had started without their departments' involvement, and only 56% had proper library buildings, confirms this marginalization. Refusal by most of the provincial departments of education, particularly in KwaZulu Natal, to acknowledge the value of school libraries is due to the sad fact that these departments do not perceive school libraries to be central to teaching and learning, as referred to by a number of researchers (Reddy 1993; Stadler 1992; Tawete 1988). The viewing of teacher-librarianship as an easy option (Charlton 1985:121), as ancillary to the teaching profession (Williamson 1989:144), as the neglected stepchild in the educational programme (Sikola in Le Roux 1992) and the regarding of teacher-librarians as refugees from the classroom (Williamson 1989:144) all correspond with the departments' negative attitudes. These viewpoints were alluded to by the respondents.

The problem of the *apathy* towards school libraries by education authorities corresponds with Fredericks' conclusion (1995:47) that the majority of policy makers in the previously coloured Department of Education and Culture were not aware of, among other things, the role of the teacher-librarian. This confirms Reddy's (1993:26) finding that the Australian educational authorities did not nurture a supportive environment for teacher-librarians, due to a lack of understanding of the role of the teacher-librarian.

The use of library buildings as *classrooms*, as reported by a number of respondents, confirms Stadler's statement (1992:45) that school libraries are one of the most abused resources.

The foregoing and the use of school library facilities as staffrooms, correspond with Charlton's (1985) observations of libraries in schools being used, for instance, for entertainment like watching TV programmes, for meetings, for lunch by teachers on bad weather days, as a goal for pupils by exasperated staff.

The problem of *heavy teaching loads* which prevent teacher-librarians from developing and maintaining library resources (Stadler 1992:45) was confirmed by the respondents who reported that they had been made to teach other subjects instead of running the library.

The *issue of principals' attitudes* was a major factor in the success of school libraries. The 39% of respondents who reported a positive attitude of their principals corresponds with the 42% who had libraries in their schools, whilst the 61% who reported a negative attitude by principals towards the library corresponds with the 58% who did not have libraries at their schools. This confirms Valentine and Nelson's correlation (1988:78) which they identified between the head's active encouragement of individualized learning and the recognition of the importance and value of school libraries. The fact that 61% of the respondents reported a negative attitude of the principals towards the school library is indicative of the seriousness of the problem.

The issue of *teachers' attitudes* towards the school library was another major factor in the nurturing of school libraries. Where a negative attitude by teachers was reported by respondents, major problems in the running of school libraries were reported. This corresponds with Olën (1993:35) and Tawete's (1988:333; 1991:129) identification of the ignorance of and the wrong perceptions about the role of the school library as major reasons for the underutilization of media centres in schools. This negative attitude illustrates the self-reinforcing cycle of teachers who have completed their schooling without libraries, who do not utilize a college library which remains peripheral to their learning and subsequently to their teaching (Kollasch 1992:68; Mbambo 1990:11). As Valentine and Nelson (1988:80) concluded, the teachers' lack of library-use skills is generally a major hindrance to the development of joint responsibility between themselves and teacher-librarians for individualized learning processes. The situations described by the respondents, such as the viewing, by teachers, of the library as a waste of time and valuable staff, teachers playing table tennis in the library, watching entertainment videos and using the library as a hiding place to miss classes, confirm the existence of such a hindrance.

The need for a strong support system for teacher-librarians is crucial for their acceptance and their role in education (Valentine & Nelson 1988:80). This need was expressed by all the respondents in their wish for a professional association, the importance of which was stressed by Fredericks (1995:48); Kachelhoffer (in Job & Kruger 1994:46) and Stadler (1992:46).

Recommendations

Under favourable conditions the ideal situation is that teacher-librarians should not be given any teaching load but should be made to run the library on a full-time basis, so that they have sufficient time to integrate the library into the curriculum. This point was emphasized by De Klerk (1995:97). The present researcher believes that the successful integration of the school library into the curriculum, which would entail working with all the teachers, would strengthen the argument for head of department status for teacher-librarians. This argument was supported in the discussion document on a policy framework for school library provision (South Africa. Department of Education 1997).

It is fair to acknowledge that this ideal of full-time teacher-librarians in South Africa is a pipe-dream in the present circumstances. According to Bawa (1996:50) effectively 83% of African teachers in primary education and 73% in secondary schools were either unqualified or underqualified in 1994 whilst Sidiropoulos (1997:150) estimated that about 46% of African teachers were under or unqualified. With this shortage of qualified teachers, it seems unrealistic to demand full-time teacher-librarians. A minimal teaching load is more realistic, noting that the Arts and Culture Task Group report (1995:38) already noted the loss of many teacher-librarian posts controlled by the (white) provincial education departments. Padayachee (in Bawa 1996:256) also noted the erosion of the teacher-librarian as a specialist so that she/he is drawn into teaching like other teachers.

There is a desperate need for a *professional association* for teacher-librarians in South Africa. This association would actively encourage and seek out membership of all teacher-librarians, especially of black teacher-librarians who have never belonged to one, as this would strengthen their voice and their position within their difficult work situations through interaction with other people in similar situations. Membership of a professional association would be empowering, especially to isolated and newly trained teacher-librarians in a number of ways, as suggested by Valentine and Nelson (1988).

It is to no avail to train teacher-librarians without *compulsory library training and information literacy courses for all teachers-in-training* both in colleges and universities, as recommended by Fredericks (1995:48) and Radebe (1996:71). The implementation of Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-based education will have to be shelved in the absence of information-literate teachers who are equipped to integrate resources and information skills in the curriculum. The biggest frustration and challenge for teacher-librarians lies in the ignorance of the majority of education professionals and principals regarding the role of libraries in ensuring an excellent education. Cognisance should thus be taken of Jones' (1989:9), Mbambo's (1990:11) and Pholosi's (1994:54) advice that libraries should form an important part of the teachers' initial training, so that libraries will become part of their teaching in turn.

Researchers such as Valentine and Nelson (1988:79) and Bawa (1996) stressed the importance of a *policy framework* for teacher-librarians and of establishing the position of the librarian in the school. The discussion document on school library standards, compiled by the Department of Education (South Africa. Department of Education 1997), will help achieve these two aims.

Workshops for principals and other educators on the role of the library, its value in the new OBE, and its centrality in learning in accordance with the stipulations of the National qualification framework are also essential given that the principals have been identified as a major hindrance to the promotion of libraries.

Courses on marketing strategies should form part of teacher-librarians training to provide them with the skills for dealing with difficult and unwilling principals, teachers and learners, as suggested earlier (Radebe 1994:46), and as expressed by them in their responses. Stevenson (1987:18) had expressed the need for such courses when she remarked that teacher-librarians were often not trained in assertive marketing techniques.

Teacher-librarians should receive *continuing* and *in-service training* to keep them up-to-date with the latest developments in their field, for instance in integration of the library in the curriculum.

The researcher reiterates a suggestion she made in earlier papers (Radebe 1994:44; 1996:69), in which she maintained that the teacher-librarians in-training are demoralized and lacking in confidence when they first come into the programme. It is therefore essential to help them regain confidence in themselves and to instil in them *assertiveness* during their training as teacher-librarians. A full discussion on various ways in which this could be achieved is beyond the scope of this article but the subject needs more research and experimentation.

Conclusion

The present researcher acknowledges the current problems faced by the education sector and school libraries in particular in South Africa, including budgetary constraints. The article does not address all the issues and problems but identifies and highlights some of those which hinder the nurturing of school libraries. Recommendations have been made about the need for training in certain skills and competencies as identified by the teacher-librarians surveyed, but a full situation analysis would be needed before all requirements could be identified.

Notes

1. The National qualifications framework is a new approach to education and training which ensures lifelong learning by providing opportunities to learn, regardless of age, circumstances and one's prior level of education and training at the entrance stage (Isaacman 1996).

2. Gwala is a Superintendent in Education Management in the Pietermaritzburg Region of the Department of Education and Culture in KwaZulu Natal.

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