

Utilization of a School Library in a Black Rural Town

By Nompumelelo M Shongwe

Background

- ❖ Mpumalanga Province, in the East of South Africa.
- ❖ 100 km to Mozambique border
- ❖ Mpumalanga province is divided into four districts, Gert Sibande is where my school is situated in Ermelo town and the township is called Wesselton.
- ❖ Wesselton was established in early 1900 and has 6 new locations and its population is 41 124.

Socio-economic

- ❖ Socio-economic situation is characterized by high unemployment.
- ❖ Unemployed residents depend on social grants.
- ❖ Most of the children are orphans because of HIV/Aids pandemic.
- ❖ After our first democratic elections Wesselton developed RDP houses (one bedroom house) for the unemployed.
- ❖ Some families do not have water and electricity.
- ❖ There are 8 primary schools, 5 high schools, one FET college in Ermelo town.
- ❖ There is one public library in Wesselton.

Umsebe Primary School

- ❖ Umsebe Primary School is where I work and it's the first primary school in Wesselton township.
- ❖ The school was established in 1940.
- ❖ It has Grade R to Grade 7 classes.
- ❖ It is a no fee school (learners do not pay fees)
- ❖ 2011 enrolment is around 1480 excluding Grade Rs.
- ❖ The school's motto is "Work and Pray".
- ❖ Post establishment of the school consists of a principal, 2 deputy principals, 5 Head of Departments, 35 post Level 1 educator s and 3 admin clerks, security guard and a cleaner = 48.
- ❖ There is a Feeding Scheme from Monday to Friday and the diet includes fresh fruit and vegetables.
- ❖ There is a scholar transport for 231 learners coming from disadvantaged nearby rural areas

The view of the school



Principal and staff



The School Library

- ❖ The school had a store room which was full of non-fiction books and textbooks.
- ❖ I approached the principal and suggested that I start a library
- ❖ I convinced the principal that I have the right qualification and experience to do the job.
- ❖ School Management team and School Governing Body agreed to the idea to convert a classroom into a library.
- ❖ Established a school library committee consisting of SMT, SGB and learners.

View of school library



School library commitee



Duties

- ❖ I am a Post Level 1 educator teaching 214 Grade 7 learners Social Sciences
- ❖ a class teacher in Grade 7
- ❖ a passionate teacher-librarian with 6 years experience in the school library.

My duties



Fundraising

- ❖ Sent letters to Business for donations of furniture and books.
- ❖ Vodacom Network donated 12000 books (fiction & non-fiction), TV set, DVD player and educational DVDs.
- ❖ Eskom (electricity utility) donated R5500, bought issuing desk and chairs.

Fundraising



Provincial Library & Information Services (ELIS) support

- ❖ The district office runs a school library competition
- ❖ Winning schools receive library resources e.g. books, computers and banners.
- ❖ ELIS introduced a skills programme for teacher-librarian Advanced Certificate in Education-ACE offered by University of KZN
- ❖ ELIS offered me a scholarship to further my teacher-librarian qualification by distance education

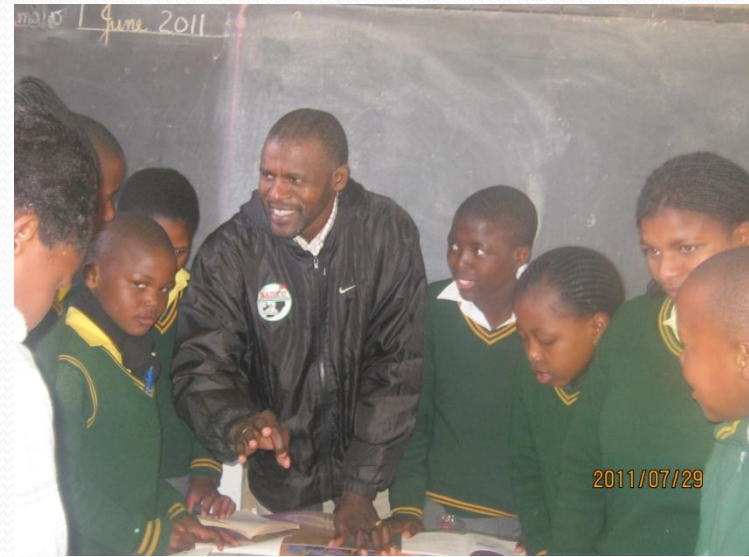
Core Function of the School Library

- ❖ Is to provide resources for educators in support of teaching programme.
- ❖ Support the teaching and development of information literacy
- ❖ Help learners to perform their daily tasks and assignments.
- ❖ Encourage good reading habits and promote independent life-long learning learners

Role of the School Library in Integration with the Curriculum

- ❖ As a teacher-librarian of the school I always make sure that I work together with the educators.
- ❖ Each educator teaches and integrates information literacy skill to learners during his/her contact time.
- ❖ I have designed an assignment notification form to help learners.
- ❖ Each educator fills in the form in advance, the form includes grade, learning area, topic, keywords and completion date.
- ❖ Our library works closely with the Public Library in Wesselton.

Integration with curriculum



Learners Projects

- ❖ Reading Clubs
- ❖ Each club has a leader
- ❖ All the reading groups have learners with learning barriers.
- ❖ The clubs meet every Fridays to share the books they have read.
- ❖ Library monitors do the shelf reading every day after school.
- ❖ Assignments after school @ 14h00-16h00 and in the morning before school @ 7h00-7h45..
- ❖ Learners conduct their own research.

Learners projects



Challenges

- ❖ No full-time post of a teacher-librarians in our schools and I am a social science teacher and also a teacher-librarian, so there's too much work to be done.
- ❖ Shortage of space, the classroom is too small for the use of school library for the whole school.
- ❖ Shortage of non-fiction books, references such as Dictionaries, Atlas Maps and shortage of fiction books such as foundation phase, puzzles and toys.
- ❖ Inadequate school library budget, because the school is a no fee school and the school library depends on donations.
- ❖ Lack of commitment of educators to integrate learning activities with the school library program.

Motivation

I have always been inspired by the late Ranganathana's 5 Laws and I always apply them when I need strength to continue to work.

1. Books are for use: Our library is not only for decorating but all books must be useful and helpful.
2. Every reader for books are for all: Every reader has a right to read a book, as an inclusive school it also includes disable learners to make use of school library.
3. Every book is a reader: Every book must be processed so that it will be easily accessible to all.
4. Save time to all readers if books are well arranged according to Dewey decimal classification or according to grades.
5. I always work together with my colleagues and am accountable to my School Manager, and stakeholders like community members are involved in the development of our school library.

Professional development



Conclusion

- Hope one day our dream to have a resource centre building will be fulfilled and
- the Department of Basic Education to provide the full-time teacher-librarian post in all schools in SA
- I WISH TO THANK THE DA VINCI FOUNDATION FOR THE FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITY