

A LEGISLATED SCHOOL LIBRARY POLICY: CAN FUNCTIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES BE ENVISIONED WITHOUT ONE?

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ABSTRACT

Although school libraries are important resource centres that support curriculum delivery and important pedagogical matters, it is disturbing that, in South Africa, only a minority (7.2%) of schools have well-stocked functional school libraries. A legislated school library policy is crucial for a country to roll out effective school library and information services (LIS). This is particularly true in South African schools, which are characterised by enormous disparities in the provision of resources because of the legacy of apartheid. Grounded in the literature review, the fact that the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) does not have a legislated and approved school library policy is a stumbling block to developing and sustaining an active and dynamic school library service for all public schools in South Africa. The purpose of this article is to help relevant stakeholders understand the importance of a legislated school library policy in championing

the establishment and development of an active, vibrant and dynamic functional school library service to support the progressive, constructivist and resource-based curriculum in the country. The study recommends that the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE 2012) be amended to a legislated school library policy to resuscitate indeterminate and non-functional libraries in the majority of schools.

Keywords: school libraries, school library guidelines, school library policy, library resources, Limpopo province, South Africa

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Internationally, educationists recognise that schools with well-stocked and well-staffed libraries perform better academically than schools without libraries (Equal Education 2011; Paton-Ash and Wilmot 2013). According to Equal Education (2010, 6):

Much research in developed and developing countries has focused on the factors which, when employed effectively, can improve the outcomes of learners. Many of these investigations pointed to the positive causal relationship between the performance of the learners and the provision of school libraries. In a major international study, for instance, researchers concluded that, all other things being equal, student performance increases by between 10% and 25% when a stocked, staffed and fully-funded library is in operation within a school.

This clearly indicates the relationship between library resources, performance and achievement of learners in a school environment. Well-equipped and well-staffed school libraries are therefore considered indispensable investments for supporting and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Evans 2014).

Du Toit and Stilwell (2012), Hart (2013) and Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015) stress the significance of a legislated school library policy in spearheading the establishment and sustainability of standardised and well-stocked functional libraries in schools countrywide. Without a legislated school library policy to roll out an active, dynamic and sustainable school library services for all schools, continuity in inequality and huge disparities in resource provisioning in schools will not come to an abrupt end.

In South Africa, the absence of a legislated national school library policy from the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) is the main stumbling block impeding all efforts and initiatives for the effective provision of school libraries (DAC and NCLIS 2014; Hart 2013; Stilwell 2009). Le Roux (2002, 11) reiterates that ‘the absence of national school library policy guidelines is of great concern to the school library profession as this has an adverse effect on the provision of school library services and curriculum reform initiatives in South Africa’. Without

a legislated school library policy, it remains a daunting challenge for all schools and the national DBE to effectively establish and sustain a vigorous and vivacious library service for all public schools in South Africa.

Functional school library and information services (LIS) are essential for curriculum delivery because the argument has been that the goals and outcomes of the resource-based curriculum in South Africa cannot be successfully ‘delivered without access to well-managed collections of learning resources’ (DAC and NCLIS 2014, 41). Without a legislated school library policy, schools are in an indeterminate state concerning the provision of library services, as there is no official document that obliges schools without libraries to provide such a facility. Lack of a legislated school library policy also implies that the national DBE is not responsible for the allocation and provision of well-resourced and well-staffed libraries in all public schools in South Africa. Subsequently, dedicated funding and staffing remain major challenges for the functionality of the different school library facilities (Stilwell 2009). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) School Library Guidelines Draft (2015, 6) reiterates that:

School libraries exist within a framework of local, regional and national authority to provide equity of opportunity for learning and for developing the abilities needed to participate in the knowledge society. In order to maintain and continuously respond to an evolving educational and cultural environment, school libraries need to be supported by legislation and sustained funding.

This is reaffirmed by Hart (2002, 14), who observes that ‘international experience shows that the development of school libraries within a society depends on the legislative and policy frameworks’.

2. OVERVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The article aims to highlight the importance of a legislated school library policy to guide and direct the effective provision and maintenance of an active and sustainable school LIS in the country. The literature review is important in academic research because it is used to identify hurdles (the lack of an approved and legislated school library policy in South Africa) in rolling out effective school LIS in the country.

The local literature review, such as books and articles, showed copious attempts made by the section responsible for school LIS within the national DBE through a plethora of draft policy frameworks to ensure that efficient LIS are established in schools to support resource-based teaching and learning endeavours. The literature review indicated that even the most recently approved and published document, the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE 2012), is merely a guideline; therefore, it will make little impact due to its lack of authority,

mandate and credibility to spearhead the establishment and sustainability of school libraries because it is not a legislated school library policy (DAC and NCLIS 2014; Hart 2013). In South Africa, only 7.2 per cent of public schools have a well-stocked functional school library and efficient LIS (DAC and NCLIS 2014; Mojapelo and Dube 2014a; NEIMS 2011). This is attributed to, among other things, the non-existence of a legislated school library policy. International documents, such as the School Library Manifesto (IFLA/UNESCO 2006) and School Library Guidelines Draft (IFLA 2015) were reviewed to highlight the value of approved policies and guidelines in championing well-resourced and well-staffed school libraries.

3. DEFINITIONS OF RELEVANT TERMS

The following definitions are considered relevant to the study:

3.1. Policy

According to Le Roux (2002, 112), a policy is defined as:

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decision and also: a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.

A parliament has a responsibility to legislate a policy so that it is followed by the stakeholders to achieve a particular goal. When a policy offers many alternatives, it is an indication that policymakers were vigilant about prevailing different socio-economic conditions, such as those found in various South African schools. A legislated school library policy in South Africa is expected to have approved school library models and standards to guide the provision of library resources in schools (SA DBE 2012; SA DoE 1997).

3.2. Legislation

Legislation is an ‘enacted or approved statement of policy, a proposal, statute or a bill’ (Birkland 2011, 263). Statutory laws or bills that are presented by the legislature are approved and signed by the president, governor or minister of a particular department (Birkland 2011). Therefore, the legislature is responsible for approving policies after they have been signed by the authoritative body. Cabinet ministers can also sign and approve policies affecting their respective departments. Therefore, through the national DBE, the government has a responsibility to formulate, legislate and promulgate a national school library policy and to ensure that it is implemented in all schools.

3.3. Norms and standards

Equal Education (2013, 1) stipulates that:

Norms and Standards are regulations that define the infrastructural conditions that make a school a school. They stipulate the basic level of infrastructure that every school must meet in order to function properly. These legally binding standards set a standard for provincial education departments to work towards, and against which to be held accountable, and enable communities to hold government officials accountable. Norms and Standards are therefore a mechanism for top-down and bottom-up accountability. The Norms and Standards regulations apply to all public schools in South Africa. This is of great significance because it means that all learners in South Africa, regardless of race and class, will be able to learn in environments with adequate infrastructure.

3.4. Guidelines

Guidelines are defined as a recommended series of suggestions or procedures for accomplishing a given task or achieving a set of goals and objectives (Stevenson 2006). IFLA (2015, 6) reiterates that ‘all guidelines represent a compromise between what we aspire to achieve and what we can reasonably expect to achieve’. Although approved by the Minister of the national DBE, Angie Motshekga, the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE 2012) document is not an approved school library policy and is therefore not mandatory. It is not a binding document yet and schools are therefore not forced to implement its ‘mere guidelines’.

4. NATIONAL CURRICULUM CHANGES SINCE 1994

The inception of the new political dispensation in 1994 signalled the end of apartheid in all its manifestations in South Africa. The apartheid government ‘consisted of a tricameral parliament with each having its own education department (Whites, Coloureds and Indians)’ (Schlebusch and Thobedi 2005, 307). Blacks were excluded from parliament to further the apartheid ideology of ‘separateness’. Initially, black schools resorted under the Department of Bantu Education and later under the Department of Education and Training (DET). Under the Nationalist government, schools allocated to blacks were subject to Bantu Education, which was propelled by the Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953) (Giliomee and Schlemmer 1989, 81). The main aim of Bantu Education was to disempower black learners so that they remained servants of their masters. Giliomee and Schlemmer (1989, 81) add that ‘spending on education continued to favour whites disproportionately’. Hart (2013, 49) reaffirms that ‘in 1994, at the demise of apartheid education, the per capita expenditure varied between R5 403 in “white” schools and R1 053 in schools in the Transkei “homeland”’. Aitchison (2006, 96) reaffirms that ‘the funding of schools

was organised in such a way as to keep Black schools under-resourced. In addition, schools in rural areas would be even more likely to be under-resourced than those in urban areas and many still are’.

Twenty-one years into a new political dispensation, as observed by Hart (2014, 2), ‘the disparities in quality between the historically white sector of schooling and the historically black sector in South Africa are still evident’. The LIS Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS 2014, 51) reiterates that:

Good school Library and Information Services (LIS) are essential to the transformation of the South African education system, which aims to provide quality schools for all South African learners. Apartheid’s Bantu education calculatedly under-resourced the schools designated for black learners. If school libraries are deemed important for quality learning, then the principles of redress and equity enshrined in the South African Constitution and educational legislation mean that ways must be found to provide them. The daunting backlogs in provision mean that innovative models of service and delivery will be required.

Since the inauguration of the new government in 1994, the whole education system has been restructured so as to consist ‘of national, provincial and local school levels’ (Schlebusch and Thobedi 2005, 307). Nineteen racially segregated and fragmented departments of education were expected to be integrated into one in order to ensure non-racial and transformed education for all learners in the country, irrespective of colour, gender and creed (Hart and Zinn 2007). Various Acts that perpetuated, enforced and propelled apartheid ethos, such as the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Separate Amenities Act, were all declared null and void, thus heralding a new political era in the history of South Africa (Giliomee and Schlemmer 1989). Bantu Education was designed to ensure inferior quality education for blacks (Paton-Ash and Wilmot 2013) as they ‘were destined to be unthinking cogs in the labour machine, in no need of libraries’ (Hart and Zinn 2007, 91). Historically, black rural communities were responsible for building their own schools, but due to a lack of adequate funds, they were extremely under-resourced without educational amenities such as libraries for reading and acquiring knowledge, and laboratories for experimentation, self-discovery and inquiry learning styles. Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2013, 136) add that ‘this translated into serious inequalities in school infrastructure’. In the light of the new political dispensation in South Africa after 1994, curriculum changes, in particular, and the general overhauling or rapid transformation of the whole education system were inevitable to ensure quality education for all (Coetzer 2001).

4.1. Outcomes-based education

To ensure accelerated education transformation since the dawn of the new political dispensation in South Africa in 1994, the new learner-centred curriculum approach called outcomes-based education (OBE) was introduced (Hart 2014; Paton-Ash

and Wilmot 2013). In South Africa, the principle of redress guaranteed that the host of education needs and challenges of previously disadvantaged and marginalised groups are specifically outlined and addressed (Coetzer 2001; Le Grange 2007). Coetzer (2001, 77) confirms that a constructivist and progressive education system that ‘enables citizens to take their rightful place in all spheres of life’ was a necessity for post-apartheid South Africa. As observed by Hart (2004) and Spreen and Vally (2010), the introduction of the OBE curriculum, curriculum 2005 (C2005) and its revision, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) into all schools was primarily aimed at ensuring the transformation of the education system in South Africa and at doing away with the apartheid curriculum. Spreen and Vally (2010, 40) observe that there was a ‘need to move away from the apartheid curriculum, and address skills, knowledge and values for social justice, equality and development ...’.

New progressive and constructivist education models were indispensable to guarantee education for all learners in the country. These new education models included OBE, which was introduced in the Foundation Phase in January 1998 (Jansen and Christie 1999; Mojapelo and Fourie 2014; Mouton et al. 2012). The revised version of OBE, that is, the RNCS, was introduced in schools in 1999. With the resource-based curriculum in South Africa, a well-articulated and vivacious school library service is indispensable to boost the education system in all schools. Le Roux (2002) confirms that ‘the supply of a wide variety of educational resources is a critical component of curriculum planning and implementation’.

However, OBE failed dismally in the majority of schools, particularly in rural communities, informal settlements and townships because its implementation was negatively affected by a host of contextual factors, such as huge disparities and inequalities in resource provision in schools (Motseke 2005; Spreen and Vally 2010). Despite other contextual factors, the situation was exasperated by a lack of or very few public or community libraries, particularly in historically disadvantaged communities (Spreen and Vally 2010).

4.2. Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements

After realising the pitfalls and challenges in the OBE curriculum implementation in South Africa, the government introduced yet another new education model in 2012. Curriculum repackaging was essential in an attempt to address the challenges and concerns relating to OBE raised by the teachers. The policy governing this new curriculum is contained in the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements (CAPS) (SA DBE 2011a). Dubbed ‘Back to basics’, CAPS uses traditional teaching and learning styles, which were employed by teachers and learners during apartheid (Spreen and Vally 2010, 41). However, the CAPS document acknowledges that the National Curriculum Statement was not phased out, but amended, and the amendments

came into effect in 2012 (SA DBE 2011b). However, it appears as if CAPS makes no reference to the use of library-based resources in supporting teaching and learning.

5. THE VALUE OF WELL-RESOURCED FUNCTIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Universally, it is incontestable that well-resourced and well-staffed school libraries are prerequisites for improving the quality of education. With well-equipped functional school libraries, teachers and learners are expected to develop and acquire information literacy skills, which are rudiments for independent and life-long learning. IFLA (2015, 17–18) confirms that:

A school library operates within a school as a teaching and learning centre that provides an active instructional program integrated into curriculum content, with emphasis on:

- Resource-based capabilities: abilities and dispositions related to seeking, accessing and evaluating resources in a variety of formats, including people and cultural artefacts as sources. These capabilities also include using information technology tools to seek out, access and evaluate these sources, and the development of digital and print-based literacies.
- Thinking-based capabilities: abilities and dispositions that focus on substantive engagement with data and information through research and inquiry processes, processes of higher order thinking and critical analysis that lead to the creation of representations/products that demonstrate deep knowledge and deep understanding.
- Knowledge-based capabilities: research and inquiry abilities and dispositions that focus on the creation, construction and sharing the products of knowledge that demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding.
- Reading and literacy capabilities: abilities and dispositions related to the enjoyment of reading, reading for pleasure, reading for learning across multiple platforms, and the transformation, communication and dissemination of text in its multiple forms and modes to enable the development of meaning and understanding.
- Personal and interpersonal capabilities: the abilities and dispositions related to social and cultural participation in resource-based inquiry and learning about oneself and others as researchers, information users, knowledge creators, and responsible citizens.
- Learning management capabilities: abilities and dispositions that enable students to prepare for, plan and successfully undertake a curriculum-based inquiry unit.

A school librarian plays a leadership role in developing these capabilities through individual and collaborative instruction and facilitation explicitly connected to curriculum content and outcomes.

However, without a well-resourced, well-funded and well-staffed school library, it is a daunting challenge to integrate an active instructional programme with resource-based curriculum content. Equal Education's successful struggle with the government over Norms and Standards in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) cannot go unmentioned. The amended South African Schools Act of 1996 indicates that 'all schools should have a library facility or media centre facility or library stocks' (SA DBE 2013, 11). Unfortunately the Act makes no mention of staff and stock. Equal Education (2011) estimated that more than R12 billion was required from the government to provide all public schools with a well-stocked and staffed school library. That included funds for library infrastructure, library materials, training and employing of a full-time librarian or administrator.

6. SCHOOL LIBRARY POLICY

A legislated school library policy is a document authorised by parliament for a country to dispense an active, dynamic and well-resourced functional school LIS for all schools. Knuth (1995, 290 in Le Roux 2002, 1) confirms that 'a school library policy has proved to have significant effect on school library development worldwide because that development is driven by official recognition inherent in legislation and formal policy documents'. However, Mojapelo and Dube (2014b, 3) warn that 'although the existence of a policy does not guarantee the development of efficient and functional school libraries, its inherent value cannot be overemphasized'.

6.1. Functions and purposes of a school library policy

A school library policy is the foundation on which the development of the school library is built. It focuses on the effective utilisation of library and information-based resources to support the curriculum and the promotion of life-long and independent reading and learning. A school library policy clarifies the aims, vision and objectives for the existence of the school library. It also undoubtedly sets out the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the development, use and sustainability of a school library (IFLA 2015). Le Roux (2002, 1) argues that 'effective government policies may push school library development forward while non-existent or poorly devised policies may hamper development at every phase from conceptualisation and planning to implementation'. With a legislated school library policy in place, school library models and standards can be implemented to enable teachers and learners to access equitable library resources in schools. Du Toit (2008, 15) explains that:

The policy framework gives an overview of school library research and of the previous history of South African school libraries, different models from which it could be possible for schools to choose from. It proposes that other models of school libraries such as classroom collections and cluster of schools sharing resources could be tried and tested. The school library should be seen as a teaching method to enhance the school's curriculum and not just as a physical facility.

Mojapelo (2008) points out that the policy would serve as a guideline pertaining to school library matters and the national DBE should ensure that it is implemented in all schools. With a legislated policy at hand, relevant stakeholders will be able to act assertively, legitimately and constantly to take school library development initiatives forward. Du Toit (2008, 6) concurs that, 'national endorsement of guidelines, norms and standards would ensure dedicated funding for implementation and prioritisation of school library development as an important instrument for curriculum delivery in schools'.

6.2. Perspectives on school library policies worldwide

The literature reviewed indicates that, in general, school libraries are neglected in most developing countries. According to Ocholla (2009), the provision of school libraries and resources is not a statutory requirement in most African countries. This is attributed to the failure of African governments through their ministers of education to commit themselves to formulating legislated and approved school library policies that provide for effective and efficient LIS for all schools. School libraries are therefore not taken seriously because of a lack of political will from most African governments. To ensure well-resourced functional school libraries, clearly defined and spelt-out school library policies at national, provincial and individual school level are essential to work towards achieving a common goal. IFLA (2015) confirms that schools ought to formulate school library policies that define goals, priorities and services in relation to the school's curriculum.

Without legislated school library policies, the problem of providing and maintaining well-resourced functional school libraries in most countries remains a challenge. Baffour-Awuah (2002) asserts that the absence of standards guiding a national vision of educational library development has prevented libraries from developing uniformly in Botswana. Baffour-Awuah (2002) reiterates that the lack of such a school library policy with school library standards is inhibiting progress and development regarding the establishment, development and provision of well-equipped and well-staffed school libraries. Du Toit and Stilwell (2012) also point out that school library policy initiatives in Namibia and Swaziland are moving at a snail's pace and have not yet been legislated. Mutungi, Minishi-Majanja and Mnkeni-Saurombe (2014) point out that there is no school library policy in Kenya, while Magara and Batambuze (2009) point out that, in Uganda, a school library

policy has not yet been finalised, although consultative meetings have been held widely. Du Toit and Stilwell (2012) assert that the lack of a legislated and approved school library policy indicates a complete disregard for school libraries in Africa.

In developed countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US) and Japan, schools have functional libraries because they are guided and directed by clearly defined school library policies and guidelines. To cite a couple of examples, in 2002, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) published a document called *The Primary School Library Guidelines* to guide and direct primary schools in Scotland in the establishment of functional libraries (CILIP 2002). National surveys are also conducted to assess whether schools have functional school libraries (CILIP 2010). Williams, Wavell and Morrison (2013, 1) confirm that in Scotland there are different models of library provision to serve the community and education with all secondary schools having access to library services either through a dedicated school library, a joint school and community library, or from a central authority library service. Williams et al. (2013, 1) also note that the majority are staffed by professionally qualified librarians who are in an excellent position to support teaching and learning by providing appropriate curriculum-related resources with a range of reading material. These help the school community to develop skills required to be proficient users of information. This particularly high level of professional staffing, compared to other areas in the UK, has enabled school librarians to develop a role that supports the curriculum and develop reading literacy (Williams et al. 2013, 1).

In 2004, the California School Library Association published a document called *Standards and Guidelines for Strong School Libraries* (California School Library Association 2004). The document was aimed mainly at guiding and directing schools to take school libraries seriously and to resource them accordingly. In 2011, the California Department of Education made great strides and published the document *Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade 12*. The document was a school library guideline for schools to establish and develop effective and functional school libraries (California Department of Education 2011).

The LIS Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS 2014, 51) recommends that:

A national school library policy that provides norms and standards for the establishing, provisioning and staffing of libraries is the first step to redress the situation. It will act as an impetus for provincial education departments to recognise the need for libraries and will provide authority for the work of the school library support services. It will also persuade schools' governing bodies to develop their own library and information policies.

In South Africa, a legislated school library policy is urgently needed to redress inequalities in resource provisioning, given our history.

6.3. School library policy in South Africa – a long journey

In South Africa, substantial attempts at formulating a school library policy have a long history. In 1997, a discussion document, the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (SA DoE 1997), was proposed under the auspices of the Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education in the Department of Education (DoE). This discussion document, together with its revised edition, the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (SA DoE 1999), identified ways to redress the disparities in school library provisioning and introduced a flexible, transitional approach by outlining several library models from which a school community could choose (Du Toit 2008, 4).

The draft policy emphasised the importance of school libraries in enhancing teaching and learning efforts as embodied by a resource-based methodology of teaching and learning. It emphasised the importance of educational resources to create an enabling environment for resource-based teaching and learning to fulfil the outcomes of the resource-thirsty curriculum (Hell 2005; SA DoE 1997). The document proposed numerous menus of school library models to give every school in South Africa an opportunity to select an appropriate model or a combination of models to cater for the curriculum needs of their teachers and learners.

Another document, the Four-year Implementation Plan of the Policy Framework for School Library Standards (SA DoE 2000), offered guidelines for the implementation of identified school library models in schools within a four-year period (Du Toit 2008). The document also proposed minimum standards to which all schools must adhere in order to make different school library models functional. School library lobbyists were excited about the move. They were also delighted that the resource-based methodology of teaching and learning emphasised the use of library resources at schools. They thought the resource-thirsty curriculum would propel the provision of well-resourced and well-staffed school libraries. Unfortunately for the school library lobbyists, the document and its implementation plan were never approved.

The South African School Library Policy (SA DoE 2001) was a draft policy document issued to stakeholders for their inputs in August 2001. It empowered provinces to develop their own provincial school library policies (KZN DoE 2003; SA DoE 2001). Although the document retained much of the content of the 1997 discussion document, it proposed the retention of only the one school–one library model for setting up libraries in South African schools (KZN DoE 2003, 12; SA DoE 2001, 14). The Policy for Library Services in South African Schools (SA DoE 2002) was the revised version of the South African School Library Policy (SA DoE 2001) based on the inputs and comments from stakeholders of the provincial departments of education. The draft policy gave provinces the power to compile their own school library policies. Even if it offered a list of school library models for schools to choose and adapt to suit their needs, resources and circumstances, the draft policy

recommended that only the one school–one library model should be adopted on the grounds of cost (KZN DoE 2003, 12).

In 2003, the national DoE produced yet another document called the Draft National School Library Policy Framework. The draft proposed two school library models, namely one school–one library and one cluster–one library (Du Toit 2008, 44). The Draft National School Library Policy (SA DoE 2005) was finalised by the heads of school library services in all nine provinces of South Africa. Although the draft proposed one model, namely the centralised school library, it also recognised the following school library models, which should be seen as part of a flexible, incremental approach:

Classroom collections	→	Centralised library		
Classroom collections	→	Mobile library	→	Centralised library
Classroom collections	→	Cluster library	→	Centralised library
School community library	→	Centralised library		

(SA DoE 2005, 23–24)

To date (2015), the national DBE does not have either an approved school library policy or a unit at national level to deal with issues pertaining to school libraries (Hart 2013, 2014; Paton-Ash and Wilmot 2013). The School Library Unit was ‘dissolved’ in 2005, which negatively stalled the formulation of the school library policy and provision of libraries in schools (Hart 2014, 4). It means that there is no official to spearhead the resuscitation of school libraries from the national DoE. Hart (2013, 49) reaffirms:

There is no national school library policy, despite five or six attempts at formulating a draft since 1996. Since the publication of the charter, the national Department of Basic Education has issued a new document, namely the *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services* (2012). However, as the document is not a legislated school library policy, the value of mere ‘guidelines’ is questionable.

Chapter 5 of the LIS Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS 2009) explores school LIS. Budget constraints may hinder the development and approval of a national school library policy; however, there are promising new developments regarding a school library policy. The approval by the government of the National Council for Library and Information Services LIS Transformation Charter in 2014, which highlighted the significance of the school library policy is a step in the right direction (DAC and NCLIS 2014). The development of the school library policy by the national DBE and provincial departments is discussed in Chapter 3 under 3.1 of the LIS Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS 2014), and an implementation plan in Chapter 7. Obviously, this gives school library lobbyists hope for an approved

school library policy which will propel the provision of well-resourced and well-staffed school libraries in the country.

6.4. No school library policy in South Africa: The implications

The lack of an approved school library policy has far-reaching implications for both the national DBE and schools under its ambit. It implies that the government and the national DBE are in no circumstances obliged to allocate a budget for schools to procure apposite library-based resources. Staffing is also a hurdle. No library posts are created for schools to hire professionally qualified or skilled teacher-librarians.

With the exception of historically advantaged ex-Model C schools in affluent communities, where learners pay school fees, ordinary public schools do not have a ring-fenced budget allocated to them from schools' own funds specifically for the provision of school LIS (Hart 2014). The non-existence of an approved school library policy in South Africa implies that there is no document from the national DBE that binds and channels schools to use a certain percentage of the Norms and Standards Grant for the provision of library-based resources.

The LIS Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS 2014, 49) indicates that:

Norms and Standards for school LIS do not exist so there has been no pressure on schools systems to develop them. The Department of Basic Education's National Guidelines for School Libraries published in 2012 are to be welcomed; but, as mere guidelines, they have had little impact.

Although some provinces, such as the Western Cape and Gauteng, have issued regulations that schools can use 10 per cent of the learning and teaching supporting materials (LTSM) budget for the procurement of library-based resources, there is no approved school library policy in the country that is a driving force behind the establishment and development of well-resourced functional school libraries, hence the 'marginalization of school libraries in the educational sphere' in South Africa (Du Toit 2008, 4). Practically, nothing binds schools to cater for the library and information needs of teachers and learners to enhance new didactic approaches, styles and strategies, as outlined in the resource-thirsty curriculum. The majority of schools therefore lack essential funding solely for the procurement of recent library materials. This is evidenced by the few old library resources and LTSM of the old curriculum in the majority of school library facilities. Machet and Tiemensma (2009) confirm that without a policy and direction from the central government, schools are choosing not to spend their limited financial resources on libraries. It is imperative to note that researchers made this conclusion from their research into how literacy education is resourced in schools in the country. Lack of sufficient library resources has a negative impact on the development of information literacy skills of both teachers and learners, reading skills and reading culture, which severely obstructs lifelong learning and independent study.

Without a legislated school library policy from the national DBE, all school library developments and initiatives in South Africa are destined for failure. To redress and address past disparities in resource provisioning in schools due to past apartheid laws, an approved school library policy is essential. It is encouraging, however, that some provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Mpumalanga, have made great strides and compiled their own school library policies.

However, it should be noted that these school library policies are not aligned, due to the non-existence of an approved school library policy from the national DBE (Equal Education 2011; Machet and Tiemensma 2009). Without an approved national school library policy from the national DBE, these provincial school library policies cannot be effective, especially with respect to staffing and funding. Du Toit (2008) asserts that both national and provincial policies that inform each other are important and necessary in order to ensure the effective development and use of school libraries. Alignment between the national school library policy and the provincial policy is extremely important to work towards achieving a common aim. Despite that, school library policies in those provinces would apparently give schools and the provincial education departments direction and guidance concerning the interim implementation of the school library standards to make different school library facilities functional.

However, the new National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE 2012) document gives guidelines and directions on issues related to the establishment and development of school libraries. Du Toit and Stilwell (2012, 124) show their optimism about the guidelines by pointing out that the initiative may advance the establishment and development of school LIS considerably, provided it is underpinned by a well-developed implementation guide. Equal Education (2011) is sceptical that the guidelines may provide financial or other support that should be given to schools and districts. This means that destitute and poor schools that do not have sufficient funds to use the information and implement the ideas in the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE 2012) will not be able to implement many of the guidelines. An informant from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) indicated that the 2012–2013 implementation guide was ‘thrown’ to the provinces, which obviously lacked budget for its effective implementation.

7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the value of well-resourced and staffed school libraries cannot be over-emphasised in education worldwide, it is clear from the literature reviewed that in most poor and developing African countries, school libraries are not taken seriously. It is clear that most African governments and their ministers of education fail to

commit themselves through an approved and legislated school library policy to provide an active and vibrant library service for all their schools.

As equality in resource provision is an inherited problem in South African schools, an approved school library policy is therefore crucial to adequately address the problem of resource provision to bring relief in the country. With the post-apartheid resource-based curriculum in South Africa, an approved school library policy is a prerequisite for the direction and guidance of the provision of an active, vibrant and dynamic school library service for all public schools in the country.

In South Africa, there has never been a national policy linking school libraries directly to the curriculum. The national school LIS unit within the national DBE should be re-established to drive the school library policy processes and guide the implementation nationwide. The unit needs to be highly placed in the departmental hierarchies and staffed by qualified school librarians and education specialists. The study also recommends that the Minister of the national DBE, relevant organisations such as the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), School Libraries and Youth Services Interest Group (SLYSIG) and the relevant stakeholders should formulate, finalise and eventually implement a legislated and approved school library policy as a matter of urgency. The policy should specifically be clear on the following:

- school library models or modalities;
- staffing, roles and responsibilities;
- professional development or training;
- funding or budget;
- collection development and management;
- resource-sharing and partnerships;
- programmes and activities;
- marketing and advocacy;
- monitoring and evaluation.

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