The Provision of Library Support Service in Colleges of Education in Botswana

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Abstract

As a result of the affiliation of the colleges of education (COE) in Botswana to the University of Botswana, the libraries attached to the colleges were assessed with a view to finding out if they met the standards recommended for college libraries. Thus, the guidelines recommended in "College Library Standards, 1995 edition" were used in assessing the six colleges surveyed. The main factors used in assessing the libraries were: mission statement, collection, staffing, budget, technical services/materials organisation, library services, library administration and facilities. The findings revealed that most of the factors enumerated above were found to be inadequate in the six college libraries surveyed. Recommendations were made to all stakeholders to ensure that the libraries were considerably improved to enable them to perform the functions for which they were established.

Introduction

There are six colleges of education (COE) in Botswana – four of them producing primary school teachers and the remaining two, secondary school teachers. All the colleges are affiliated to the University of Botswana. They are: Francistown College of Education; Lobatse College of Education; Serowe College of Education; Tlokweng College of Education; Molepolole College of Education; and Tonota College of Education. The first four are geared towards primary school teachers, while the last two are for secondary school teachers.

In order to ensure the production of quality teachers for schools, the government directed that the teacher training institutions in the country should get affiliated to the University of Botswana.

It is pertinent to note that through this system of affiliation, the University has the responsibility for the maintenance of academic and professional standards of the diplomas for which the students in these institutions are prepared. The terms of affiliation made a proviso of three fundamental functions for the would-be affiliated institutions. First, it states that the institutions that wish to be affiliated to the University have to meet and maintain the standards, in terms of staff, facilities and resources, deemed appropriate by the University.

Secondly, the University will moderate the results of the students on programmes leading to awards of diploma in the colleges to ensure that they meet the standards required by the University. Thirdly, the affiliated institutions may, if they so wish, seek the advice and assistance of a University faculty or department in the development and review of their programmes. (University of Botswana Calendar, 2000/01).

In fulfilment of the terms and conditions of affiliation, the University of Botswana Library has the obligation to ensure that the library collections and services of the colleges, among other academic structures, are of a high quality. The University of Botswana Library (UBL), therefore, is of the belief that the libraries of the affiliated institutions should compare well with international standards for tertiary level college libraries. In carrying out its role, and to rule out the possibility of doubts, the UBL presented the required standards and recommended guidelines to the principals of these affiliated colleges in the 1995/1996 academic year for their information and consideration. With the provision of the benchmarks, and in clear appreciation of the inadequacies of their libraries, the colleges pledged to improve collections and services.

On the strength of the above, this study was conducted during the 1998/1999 academic year to determine the extent of compliance with the required standards and recommended guidelines for the college of education libraries in Botswana. The study aimed to examine how well the libraries provide good educational and intellectual support to classroom based-student learning and to lecturers' research in relation to the expected standards. The study was also out to suggest ways to further improve the library operations, equipment and technology with a view to improving the quality and standard of service in these libraries.

Methodology

In order to obtain a good measure of reliability in this study, the instruments used to collect data comprised a questionnaire, observation and interview. The four-page questionnaire comprised closed and open-ended questions. It was mailed to the institutions. Observation and interview schedules were used to enable the librarians and principals present their views and even volunteer information which they might not want to commit into writing. Visits were also arranged by the researchers to

observe and assess the existing facilities in order to gain first hand information on existing facilities.

Results of Findings

The primary mission of libraries within the colleges is to provide academic support to students and staff. The libraries have the responsibility to meet the information resource and service needs of the population it serves, as they relate to the programmes offered within the college. In order to ensure that the college libraries meet these needs of the population they serve, the standards set were taken from the United States of America and the United Kingdom, Library Associations (*College Library Standards 1995 Edition*) to enforce the college library standards. The Standards cover eight broad areas by which the quality of a library can be assessed. These include: mission statement, collections, staffing, budget, technical services/ material organisation, library services, library administration and facilities.

The issues raised in this study are in line with the above eight headings since they embrace significant areas on which the quality of any library can be appraised. All the identified areas need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure conformity with the changing information resource and service needs of the population served.

Mission Statement

In developing the mission statement of a library, librarians need to focus on the overall mission of the college. This accounts for the reason why commentary under Article 1.1 of the guideline states that the library should seek in a formal or structured way the advice and guidance of the primary users, the classroom faculty and students. It enjoins the existence of consultations with the college administration, in particular those officers responsible for academic programmes and policies. The guideline further succinctly states that a college library shall develop an explicit statement of its mission in accordance with the mission of the college.

The researchers observed that the mission statements of the college libraries were broad and general. For instance, all of them indicated that they supported the teaching, learning and research of the institutions they served. Their mission objectives were not clear-cut enough to provide a measure by which the user community that the libraries serve could understand and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of their services. It is observed that they need to restate their aims and objectives in explicit and quantifiable terms. The study also revealed that the formulation of the mission statement was the product of the perception of the college librarians alone. If any, it was devoid of any form of consultation with the library primary users and college policy makers. It was also noted with concern that not much was done on periodical review which was stipulated in the guideline. Most of

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the librarians appeared not to give any premium to the statement of library objectives which should also be reviewed and revised periodically as necessary.

Collection

The guideline on collection states that collections shall comprise all types of recorded information. This includes print and audio-visual materials, sound recordings, materials used with computers, etc. The guideline further states that the collection should boast of 15 volumes of books for each of the full-time equivalent (FTE) student and 100 volumes per faculty member. This is in addition to having a basic collection of 85, 000 volumes.

It is remarkable to note that at the time of this study none of the colleges moved close to meeting this target. None of them had CD-ROM or materials in machine-readable format or materials used with computers. Indeed, none of the libraries had a single computer of its own to keep pace with the stride in the modern information and communications technology (ICT) world. Sadly enough, the collection of the libraries surveyed was further debilitated by the common denominator of acquiring books in multiple copies that ranged from two to ten or more in some cases. The corollary of this common phenomenon among the college libraries is that the collections might be large superficially when in reality there were only few titles available. An example will probably suffice here. In one college library the total collections were 6,665 volumes. When counted in title terms the collection was reduced to 2,218.

A number of reasons were found traceable to acquisitions of materials in multiple copies. Firstly, it was noted that virtually all the college libraries were short-staffed. This is treated in greater detail under staffing below. It is however important to state that the entire responsibility of the library, including selection and cataloguing processes, among others, rested squarely on the shoulders of only one professional librarian found in each of the libraries. The implication of this is multifarious. For example, it was observed that thoroughness in selection might be missing.

Secondly, it was noted that the process of tendering for books to acquire by the college libraries left so much to be desired. For example, experience has shown that the winner of tender often found it difficult or impossible to supply all the selected items. The bid to exhaust the votes allocated for books at the last minute before the end of the financial year could result in fire brigade approach, which includes acquiring the materials in multiple copies.

The third reason observed was the absence of a collection development policy that could guide the acquisitions of library materials. It was therefore common to see some principals taking up the role of acquisitions librarians without applying any clear-cut policy. Of course, the absence of clear development policy did no good to the credibility of librarians as well. The study revealed that the libraries were used as

dumping grounds where some departments in the college passed leftovers of the self-purchased textbooks after distributing the rest to their students.

Staffing

In determining the guideline on library staffing, the basic criteria considered include the library's need for services, programmes and collection organisation. The guideline prescribed adequate size and quality staff that would meet the above needs. The quality in staff is unambiguously spelt out as it stipulates that the college library shall need a staff composed of qualified librarians and skilled support staff.

While it is noted that librarians that headed all the six college libraries were degree holders, it is regrettable that the libraries did not have adequate professional staff. Each of the libraries had only one professional librarian. This was even in the face of the formula for librarians, which stated in part and enjoined a library to have one librarian "for each 5,000 volumes or fraction thereof, added and/or withdrawn per year". The guideline states that enrolment, collection size and growth of collection should determine the number of librarians required by the college. The guideline was still awaiting application at the time the study was undertaken.

The staffing situation was also not helped by the inadequate or total lack of support staff in the libraries. The guideline directs that the library should have "no less than 65 per cent of the total library staff". The study revealed that only three of the six colleges had skilled support staff – three did not have. Even then, the three that had skilled support staff could not meet the minimum percentage of 65% of total staff required. The highest of the three colleges that had skilled support staff was the Molepolole College of Education which had 40%. The other two colleges of education had one skilled support staff each. Two different establishments were responsible for the recruitment of library staff to the colleges. The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) was to ensure that professional staff were supplied, while the college were to recruit support staff.

Other libraries that are not mentioned above did not have skilled support staff. It is needless to say that a single-man library creates an unhealthy environment for any serious academic work, especially in residential campuses. There is little a single person can do in an academic environment where students reside 24 hours a day.

Budget

The guideline on budgeting clearly recommends that the library budgets, exclusive of capital costs and the costs of physical maintenance, should not fall below six per cent of the college's total educational and general expenditures. It is pleasing to note that all the colleges of education met this criterion as shown in table 1. For example, Francistown and Serowe Colleges of Education had the highest budget with 10.4%

each of their institutional budgets. Tonota and Molepolole Colleges of Education followed them with 7.9% and Lobatse and Tlokweng Colleges of Education with 7.3 %.

Although, the budget appeared healthy for each library, the situation on the ground was far from being adequate. This is because the basic collection of 85,000 volumes recommended as standard requirement was yet to be met by any of the libraries. It is hereby submitted that a lot still has to be done on budget with a view to meeting the collection standard.

Table 1: Percentage of Library Budget to Institution

Institution	Library Budget %
Francistown College of Education	10.4
Serowe College of Education	10.4
Tonota College of Education	7.9
Molepolole College of Education	7.9
Lobatse College of Education	7.3
Tlokweng College of Education	7.3

Technical Services / Organisation of Materials

Article 3.1 of the guideline states that there shall be a comprehensive catalogue of the library's holdings that permit identification of items, regardless of format or location, by author, title, and by subject as appropriate. It further stipulates that library collections "shall be organised by approved conventions and arranged for efficient retrieval at time of need". In making their selections of materials to be organised, the respondents were asked to name the selection tools they consulted. It is important to note that out of the variety of tools, such as global books in print (GBIP), book reviews, the Internet, publishers catalogues and pre-selection slips, publishers' catalogue was the only tool used by all the colleges. Other tools were hardly available to them.

The respondents were asked to state the classification scheme and cataloguing rules they used. All of them indicated that they used *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC) scheme and *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* second edition (AACR2) for cataloguing. There is no problem with the cataloguing rules used. However, some of the college libraries did not follow the rules strictly. The use of *Sears List of Subject Headings* as claimed by the libraries did not correlate with the subject headings assigned to most books.

It is known that the essence of cataloguing and classifying materials is to facilitate easy and efficient retrieval and storage. But our investigation revealed that some recent and already processed publications were in cartons in the office or in

storerooms when very old materials were prominently displayed in their multiple copies on the shelves.

Library Services

The commentary on the guideline indicated that the primary purpose of college library service is to promote and support the academic programme of the parent institution. The library should therefore maintain a range of services that will ensure an optimal library use. The questionnaire, in conformity with this expectation, itemised a range of services a college library should perform. These include library orientation, bibliographic instruction service, reference service, reprographic service, CD-ROM search service and reserve collection service, among others. Services like library orientation service, reserve collection service, issue and return service, current awareness service and inter-library loans service were undertaken by all the libraries. One of the libraries did not have a reprographic service. This has serious implications for the safety of materials in the library. Some valuable pages of library materials could fall victims of rip-off by unscrupulous users who might otherwise want to photocopy. None of the college libraries had CD-ROM facility. Whilst all the libraries performed library orientation, none was undertaking bibliographic instruction and information literacy skills service. Plans were already underway to get all the libraries automated.

Library Administration

Article 7 of the guideline states, "the college library shall be administered in a manner which permits and encourages the fullest and most effective use of available library resources". In carrying out the above responsibility, Article 7.3 directed the institution to "have a standing advisory committee comprising students and members of the classroom faculty which shall serve as a channel of formal communication between the library and its user community". It is noted with satisfaction that the six college libraries complied with this directive. In most cases, the Deputy Principal (Academic) headed the committees. Article 7.2 of the guideline had earlier advised that the Librarian should report to the chief academic officer of the institution. One conspicuous omission found in most libraries was the lack of clearly written policies and procedures covering library internal governance and operation activities, which article 7.4 enjoined them to have.

The questionnaire sought to know how often the librarians arranged meetings with the teaching staff. Three colleges indicated twice a term, two reported regularly and the remaining one, once a term. The result of the question on how often the librarian sought formal audience with the principal or deputy principal was as varied as tabulated in table 2 below.

Table 2: Meeting with the Principal / Head / Deputy Principal

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Rarely	1	16.7
Regularly	3	50.0
Once a term	1	16.7
Twice a term	1	16.7
Total	6	100

There were two burning issues which all the librarians complained about. One was shortage of staff – professional and non-professional. The second problem, which is an offshoot of the first, bothers on the confusion that often arises on who should be consulted on staff matters. While the college librarians would prefer to be under the auspices of their respective colleges and the colleges were ready to absorb them, the BNLS would still like to maintain the secondment of librarians to the colleges.

Facilities

The guideline on facilities stipulates that the library building shall be calculated on the basis of a formula which takes into consideration the size of the students' body, the size of staff and its space requirements and the number of volumes in the collection. It states that the needs of persons with disabilities should receive special attention in the design of library building. In order to ensure this compliance, the guideline recommends that a new library building should represent a coordinated planning effort involving all campus constituents. Formula C (a) of the guideline declares that for the library of a typical residential college (which is the same with the colleges studied), there shall be one study location for every four FTE students. Each study station is assumed to require 25 to 35 square feet floor space. Only one of the colleges gave consideration to the special needs of people with disabilities who may come to the library in wheel chair. A librarian reported that he was not consulted in the building of a new library. Space for books in most of the libraries was grossly inadequate as processed books were seen in cartons competing for space with librarians in their offices. The specification on study space was discussed as attempts were made to maximise every little space available for readers. As if this inconvenience was not enough, most of the libraries were stuffy for lack of air-conditioners even as proper illumination was not given due regard. Hardly did the researchers find any library that could accommodate a quarter of the students. Even in the colleges where new library buildings had just been put up, old furniture still adorned the libraries. Table 3 reveals the number of students in the institutions and the readers' seats.

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Table 3 : Space for Users

Institutions	Students Number	Readers Seats	% of Seats to Students
Francistown COE	236	52	22.00
Lobatse COE	310	80	25.80
Molepolole COE	640	120	18.75
Serowe COE	206	26	12.60
Tlokweng COE	300	N.A	N.A
Tonota COE	638	90	14.10

* N.A. Not available

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is an eye-opener to the operations of the libraries in colleges of education in Botswana. The study also points out a number of grey areas needing attention. It is therefore imperative for all role players and stakeholders to improve the quality of libraries in the colleges of education in Botswana. These role players include the Ministry of Education, the University of Botswana Library, the Botswana National Library Service, the authorities of the colleges of education and the librarians themselves.

While the Ministry of Education, under which the colleges operate, provides adequate funding, as all the libraries received at least the recommended minimum funding allocation of 6% of the institutional allocation, there is a need to improve the funding of college libraries. At least four of the colleges need to have new library buildings. The librarians also wanted to have their catalogues in machine-readable formats and other operations assisted by computerisation. But unfortunately funds were not available or sufficient to acquire their required software package. The recommended basic collection of 85,000 volumes was also not met in all the libraries. The Ministry of Education and the Department of Teacher Education should therefore give consideration to increased funding to the college libraries.

It is important for the University of Botswana Library (UBL) to arrange training, workshops, seminars, etc to assist the librarians, especially in the areas of ICT. The UBL can also help to update the college librarians in the technical area of librarianship which is another perceived area of inadequacy. Such opportunities will get them updated with recent trends and development in the library and information scene.

The BNLS as the body responsible for the recruitment of professional staff to the college libraries needs to be more sympathetic to the plight of the single librarian posted to each of these libraries. A single librarian cannot be attentive in a library where students reside on campus. It is therefore not surprising that college libraries

either have to close or in extreme cases operated by unskilled staff when the only librarian is unavailable. It is needless to say that adequate opening hours will be guaranteed when the libraries have adequate staffing. There is a need to review the mode of recruitment of librarians in the colleges. Rather than BNLS being the appointing authority, and the colleges, the supervising authorities, it is suggested that the colleges should be allowed to recruit librarians directly.

And to the college librarians, they may have to make strong representation to the relevant authorities on the need to provide efficient and effective library service in the colleges. There is also the need for the librarians to work out the modalities of professional interaction with their University of Botswana professional colleagues. There is no doubt that there is still much to be done in all the college libraries in order to make their services effective and efficient.

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