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MODULE FOUR

UNIT FIVE

Libraries, Media and Low Cost Teaching Aids

Introduction

It is not by accident that the topics in this unit are grouped together; the title could well be 'Support for Classroom Teaching', for libraries, media and low cost teaching aids are all ways of enhancing the learning environment in school. In this unit you will consider why each should be given priority if you wish to improve the quality of learning by the pupils in your school.

Individual study time: 4 hours

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- be more aware of the ways in which a school library, the media and low cost teaching aids can enhance the learning of pupils
- promote the use of school library facilities and develop good reading habits amongst the pupils
- encourage teachers to produce low cost teaching aids, and see that they have the means to do so
- develop the skills in teachers of identifying, and taking advantage of, usable teaching resources in and from the local environment
- explore ways of expanding and improving library resources
- appreciate the need to involve the community in school library activities.

Importance of library, media and low cost teaching aids and constraints

Activity 5.1

- (1) Explain why a school library, media and low cost teaching aids are important for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools.
- (2) Identify some of the constraints you face in providing them in your school.

20 minutes

Comments

The library

In the narrowest sense a school library offers children an additional choice of reading material with a variety of reading levels and topics; in the broader context, through instructed and controlled use of the library, they are encouraged to develop lifelong reading habits and skills which will support their own self-development.

A library is mainly a collection of books but can also include non-book materials such as video and audio cassettes, magazines, display and resource material.

A school library does not have to be a purpose built building; it can consist of an adapted classroom or series of boxes containing books kept by different classroom teachers. The main purpose is that pupils have access to books and related materials which will encourage individual reading, advance knowledge and stimulate the imagination.

Media

This is a popular term for mass communication involving the press, radio and television. This unit does not deal with the structured and planned use of the media for education in the sense of school radio broadcasts, television programmes or professional journals, but rather covers the use of the media as a resource for school based or individual initiatives.

Low cost teaching aids

Low cost teaching aids are attractive if there is little or no cost and they aid the teacher. Later in this unit we will consider such questions as: What are they? Are they a substitute for higher cost, professionally made and commercially sold teaching aids? Can a home-made teaching aid be superior to the commercial article, and if so, in what ways? We need to remember that a teaching aid is the use of any object, manufactured, homemade or natural, which is used to promote good teaching.

Some of the reasons why these resources should be given priority include the following:

- 1 A head and the teachers should be creative and should not become over dependent on outside resources.
- 2 Through the use of resources, lifelong pupil attitudes, skills and responsibilities in terms of creativity, innovation and self-reliance can be developed.
- 3 Teaching/learning can become more positive, interesting, varied, and therefore more effective, through the frequent and selective use of resources.
- 4 Cost is always a factor in education, but it does not always have to be the factor which determines the quality of teaching.

Constraints

Some of the constraints which hinder the provision and uses of resources include the following:

- 1 Financial provision is usually too low to buy sufficient library books initially, or on a regular basis.
- 2 Teachers may lack training, creativity and work capacity and may therefore be unable to explore, experiment with, develop and use low cost teaching aids.
- 3 The media, in a usable form, sometimes do not reach the locality of the school.
- 4 There may be limitations in the provision of space and storage facilities.

Libraries

The school library has a significant role to play in the education of the pupil as a result

of the emergence of multi-media education and resource based learning. Pupil-centred education takes into account an individual's interests and abilities and facilitates much greater participation, allowing the pupil to progress at his or her own pace. The library should be a centre for active learning not simply a repository of books and resource materials. It may also be seen as a centre for the production and storage of materials including low cost teaching aids.

The following three statements are non-controversial and may be accepted by everyone:

- 1 A school library is for pupil use, during and after the school day, to encourage an enjoyment of reading and to supplement specific subject areas being taught in the curriculum.
- 2 Pupils have to be trained in the use of the library.
- 3 Pupils have to be trained in the care and use of books and other reading materials.

Activity 5.2

The checklist in Fig 8 gives twelve areas which test the extent to which you put into practice your belief in the above statements.

30 minutes

Fig 8 Checklist

1 Which of these describes how you timetable library use during the day?

- a voluntary arrangement with teachers making bookings according to their needs
- on the main timetable as a permanent feature
- allocating subject departments certain specific times
- other arrangements

2 If you agree that the school library should be open for pupils after school, who amongst the following should administer the library after school?

- the teacher responsible for the library
- library prefects working under supervision
- a member of the school administrative staff
- someone else

3 Do you limit access and the times of access to pupils? If so, what criteria do you use? For example, do you limit access to the library to one class or one year group at a time? _____

- 4 Books are expensive and security can be a major concern. What do you do about:
- protecting your stock? _____
 - allowing pupils to carry textbooks into the library? _____
 - making your borrowing system secure – what system of borrowing do you use? _____
- 5 If a pupil loses a book, what action do you take? _____
- 6 If a pupil damages a book, what action do you take? _____
- 7 The library supports the curriculum. Remember if a teacher knows what reading material is in the school library and is involved in ordering new books, then the project method of teaching with groups of pupils preparing material to present on a certain topic encourages library usage. However, there must be material available in the library and the pupils must have access to it at the time when they need it.
- How do you decide on what books to order? Do you:
- allow the librarian to decide on her own?
 - form a committee of subject heads to decide?
 - divide the available funds using a set formula?
 - target different subjects each year?
 - follow some other scheme?
- 8 Do you subscribe to the national press and international news media? Does it meet your target? _____
- 9 To have a viable library you need direct teacher involvement. How do you involve teachers? What training do you provide them with? _____
- 10 Each library should have a reference section but often reference books are the most expensive. What sort of reference books should a school library have? What is the ratio of seating spaces to the total number of pupils in the study area within the library? _____
- 11 The appearance of the library should help to create an environment conducive to work, including display boards, furniture arrangements and sign boards. How well would you rate the quality of the library environment in your school? _____

12 In the rural areas the school may become the centre of the cultural life of the village. In this situation how can a school library also be a community library? For example, what adjustments will have to be made to library routines, procedures, the book stock and book distribution system? _____

Taking into account the twelve areas covered above, do you have up-to-date rules for library usage and guidelines for its management?

Comments

Your answers to these twelve sets of questions will demonstrate the extent to which you have been able to develop a positive management strategy towards the provision, organisation and operation of your school library. Sometimes libraries appear rather isolated from the mainstream of learning in classrooms, and neglected by the school head as an area over which he or she has active authority. Your answers should provide you with ideas about what could be done to improve the library provision in your school.

The library in the classroom

Many primary schools have no library room; instead each teacher builds his or her own library in boxes in the classroom. Ideally such boxes should contain 40 to 60 books carefully selected for language and content, and with 40 pupils it is necessary for the teacher to keep a careful record of books issued and books read.

Activity 5.3

- (1) Design a book issue/return record sheet which could be used with a class library.
- (2) Suggest three ways in which it would be possible for a teacher to check whether a pupil has read a book or not.
- (3) A problem with book boxes is that pupils have access to only a small number of books which limits the choice of abler pupils. How would you suggest this problem could be overcome?

20 minutes

Comments

A simple form should be kept with each book with the library box, so that the name of each pupil may be recorded. It is important to check all the time how much and how well the pupils are reading. This can be done by spending time with them as they read, by asking them questions about a book when they have finished it and by asking them to write something about the contents (about the story if the book is a novel). The books should be graded using a simple colour code, perhaps with three colours to indicate levels of language and content, and this will enable both the more able and less able pupils to choose books they can manage.

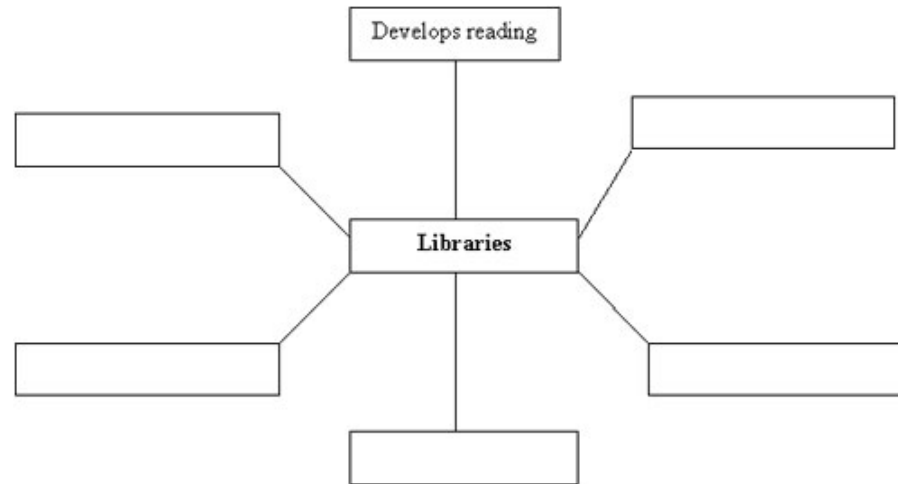
Benefits for pupils

Activity 5.4

Fill in the blank boxes in Fig 9 with appropriate benefits for pupils using the school library.

10 minutes

Fig 9 Benefits of school libraries



Comments

Which did you include:

- research skills
- appreciation of the value of books
- writing skills
- improved spelling
- increased knowledge?

Expanding a school's library service

Most school libraries have a limited stock. Heads of schools continually face the problem of renewal, updating and replacement with very little money provided for this purpose, and they will need to seek other ways of expanding their library service.

Here is a list of suggestions:

- 1 Contact nearby schools to set up a book exchange service.
- 2 Ask for assistance from the National Library Service.
- 3 Assign the task to the PTA.
- 4 Seek help from the Old Students' Association.
- 5 Seek donor assistance (see Unit 8: 'Finding Financial Resources').

Activity 5.5

Give the advantages and disadvantages of each of the above suggestions. Is a bad book better than no book?

20 minutes

Comments

Supporting the school library as an active centre of learning is something which may well interest individuals and groups outside the school. Launching an appeal for funds by the school will bring to their attention an area where they can help. They should be encouraged to supply funds, rather than books, since it is very unlikely they will know your needs. Bad books are no better than no books. If every school looked to donor agencies or national bodies for help they would be overwhelmed, however, there is no harm in asking. On the other hand your most reliable source of funds is likely to be from those who are closer to your school.

Community involvement

Activity 5.6

Parent A is forever encouraging his child to read and improve her academic performance at school but is never seen to be reading anything himself.

Parent B visits the school library on occasions to browse through magazines and newspapers, and periodically checks out a book to read at home.

- (1) Of the two parents which is the better model for their child and why?
- (2) How can parents provide a good model for their children to follow?
- (3) How can you and your staff help parents to help their children?

20 minutes

Comments

It has been noted that successful pupils more often come from homes where there are books to read and where the parents demonstrate their own interest in the written word. The more adults, including parents, teachers and school heads, can provide role models the more children will be encouraged to read.

Characteristics of a good library

Activity 5.7

The quality of a school can be quite easily measured in a number of different ways.

One such Performance Indicator is the rate at which the pupils borrow books. Identify five other key indicators.

20 minutes

Comments

The borrowing rate per pupil is perhaps the best indicator of the quality of a school library, but there are many others. The expenditure per pupil per year gives a clear guide as to how well the library is being maintained and developed. The number of books per pupil is another good indicator, though if old and out-of-date books are not weeded out then the rate may be inflated. The rate of accession of new books and of weeding out old stock will provide an indication of the way the collection is being maintained. Old stock should be given away, not destroyed. Security is often a problem in schools and so the loss rate provides a quality indicator, though this can only be done if a full stock-taking exercise is regularly carried out. Two other

indicators are the length of time the library is open each week and the seating capacity to allow individual study in the library.

Media and low cost teaching aids

Through newspapers, magazines and journals pupils are kept fully informed on national and international current events. The library should stock a selection of daily, weekly and monthly publications.

Activity 5.8

- (1) What criteria do you use for the selection of newspapers, magazines and journals?
- (2) How do you ensure that a cross-section of political viewpoints is represented?
- (3) How do you teach your pupils to differentiate between fact and opinion?
- (4) Can you demonstrate how well you are able to obtain free materials which are available from national and international agencies, and from the private sector?
- (5) How do you use these materials once they are no longer needed in the library?

20 minutes

Comments

In most countries there is quite a wide range of newspapers, magazines and journals freely available or to purchase. It is important to ensure a careful selection, and factors such as cost, regular availability, and appropriateness of the contents to the learning needs of your pupils, need to be considered. Materials of these types are often promoting particular political viewpoints, and so it is important to ensure that a cross-section of views are represented, and that you provide opportunities, for example, in Social Studies, language teaching or History, to teach pupils how to separate out fact from opinion and to select what they read. Library materials should be actively and positively used by both pupils and teachers. In using material of this nature in the classroom pupils are made aware of the value of such sources in forming or influencing opinion and conveying up-to-date information and adding to knowledge acquired through textbooks.

Some embassies, agencies (such as Unesco, UNDP), banks and commercial organisations distribute newsletters and information sheets at no cost; posters and calendars can be obtained from publishers, school suppliers and other companies. Schools should take advantage of these offers - if only to use the illustrations, update data and for display purposes.

Certain broadcasts can be of value, for example, speeches on historic occasions, budget speeches, radio plays and debates on environmental matters. By taping such broadcasts, editing them for classroom usage, and inserting them at the appropriate point in the curriculum, a valuable resource can be built up for the school. The art teacher can use magazine pictures for collages and newspaper for papier m/ch, work. The teacher of English can use 'headlines', serious articles and crossword puzzles.

Production of teaching aids

Low cost teaching aids are attractive to all heads who run their schools on a small

budget. Obviously cost is no longer a factor and the teachers are using teaching aids other than the chalkboard. Very often in fact there is no cost at all in that many teaching aids can be made from scrap items such as empty matchboxes, cardboard cylinder interiors of toilet rolls, rubber bands, pieces of wire and the reverse sides of discarded posters.

Activity 5.9

Suggest what low cost or no cost teaching aids your teachers should be using in their classrooms, whether at primary or secondary level, in the following subjects:

- Art and Craft;
- Design and Technology;
- Geography;
- Science;
- Mathematics.

10 minutes

Comments

In the widest possible sense the entire local environment can be regarded as the principal source area for such teaching aids, not just in the search for usable materials, but in locating and identifying local seasonal phenomena which may reinforce concepts taught in the classroom. For instance, after a heavy rainstorm ground with no vegetation cover shows many examples of drainage features to be found in river systems, as well as erosion mechanisms and patterns. A Geography/Social Studies teacher can take advantage of this phenomenon by taking groups of pupils to observe, record and reason.

Activity 5.10

Give further instances of how the local environment of a school can be used positively in:

- (1) A rural setting (for example, collecting seeds for a lesson).
- (2) An urban setting (for example, collecting cans for re-cycling).

10 minutes

Comments

The extent to which low cost or no cost teaching aids are used in a school is indicative of the commitment and quality of the teachers. You may readily identify creative teachers, who are prepared to take extra trouble for the sake of their pupils. Obviously teachers of this calibre are valuable in any school.

Summary

In the school context the word 'library' can have a number of meanings, all of which should be applied to enrich the teaching and learning in the school. The school head should involve the local community in library development and usage as well as encouraging teachers to take advantage of the local environment as a source of low cost teaching aids.

