REPOSITIONING OUR LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRES FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

Mr. Pius Adakole Ijiga

Abstract

Traditionally the learning resources centre is an educational service centre that adopts integrated approach to improve teaching and learning through the use of various resources and through improved curriculum development activities. Its establishment is predicated on the assumption that children learn at different rates and in different ways and these differences should be provided for by manipulating the learning environment and situations to accommodate it. This paper takes apposition That aside the traditional role of the centre as facilitator of learning; it can be re-positioned to operate as a revenue-yielding outfit for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

Introduction

The emergence of learning resources centres (LRC) is as a result of a wide range of trends, developments, and research in education, psychology and sociology. The centre represents the attainment of a highly sophisticated level of integration of people, processes, and resources. As a result, they have enabled educators to achieve the flexibility required to manipulate the teaching ~ learning environment to the advantage of individual learners.

According to Adewoyin (1991), learning resources centre is "an environment in which the motivated learner may gain full concentration, study source information as the first process of self discovery, gain self-actualisation, and be able to apply information to his own purposes". Often times, the term, Seaming resources centre is used as the name of an instructional unit that co-ordinates a number of learning resources - related services for students and teachers. Other terms which relate to these same services include:

- Media Resources Centre
- Educational Technology Centre
- Learning Resources Laboratory
- Instructional Resources Centre
- Educational Resources Centre etc.

An historical perspective of learning resources centres reveals that they may never have developed without the necessary advancements in technology, the acceptance of certain views about the individual and individual differences and the prime of place the government and education policy makers give to it in the National Policy on Education, with particular reference to Teacher Education Curriculum.

In Nigeria, apart from the National Educational Technology Centre in Kaduna, which performs the functions of a Learning Resources Centre, the various State governments have been trying to complement the efforts of the Federal Government by establishing their own resources centres, giving them different names, and affiliating them with Ministry of Education in their respective States. Besides, nearly all Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics have one form of learning resources centre or the other, of varying sizes and objectives. The underlying philosophy of learning resources centre is based on the philosophy that the individual learner is capable of assuming responsibility for much of his or her own learning. According to Bennie (1985) they are based, also, on "the understanding that children learn in different ways and at varying rates and; the belief that it is incumbent upon educators to provide for these differences.

Conceptual Framework for Learning Resources Centre (LRC)

As stated above, learning resources centre (LRC) concept is based upon the understanding that children differ. They differ in their developmental patterns -- physiological, psychomotor, socio-psychological and cognitive. They differ in the ways in which they approach tasks. They differ with respect to interests, aptitudes, talents, abilities, attitudes and values. They differ in how they perceive and

interact with their environment, both external and internal (Burner, 1964).

Leaning resources centres therefore have as their goals the development of skills and behaviours that will enable the individual to fulfill his or her creative and adaptive potentials and to survive in a world where change is so rapid that all knowledge must be tentative. Accordingly, learning resources centres focus on the development of:

(i) The instrumental skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, visual literacy, and
   mathematics;
(ii) Productive thinking or problem-solving skills (analytic thinking);
(iii) Social interactive skills;
(iv) Creative and expressive behaviours;
(v) Self processes, including development of self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-conception, self evaluation and self-esteems; and
(vi) Development of enquiry skills, information retrieval skills, and research skills (Bennie, 1985:35).

Another facet of learning resources centres is their focus upon the uniqueness of each individual learner with respect to his or her style, rate and patterns of learning, as well as differences in interests and aptitudes, To accommodate these individual differences, learning resources centres employ a process approach to individualisation of instruction, which includes systems for assessing, diagnosing, prescribing for, monitoring, evaluating and re-assessing individual learner needs and achievements. According to Cole (1972) such a system implies the need for a differentiated staffing patterns and such system is supported by computers, teacher-aides, and technicians.

In summary, learning resources centres represent a high level of sophistication in the integration of human and situational resources, through systems design, to make possible, the accommodation of individual student needs in relation to the development of the life relevant process skills.

Properties of the Learning Resources Centre (a)
Physical Design

The design of the learning resources centre should reflect, and be consistent with the philosophy, objectives and assumptions underlying the centre. It should therefore facilitate individualisation of instruction and development of the life-relevant skills and behaviours in a way that reflect an understanding of how learning occurs at the stages of maturity of the students that the centre will be servicing.

In addition, it should be conducive to independent, individual learning as well as small group interaction. There should also be areas for large group, audio-visual lessons and presentation, for conferencing, for diagnosis and prescriptive programming, for material production and for evaluation (Hostrop, 1973).

According to Bennie (1985) a basic Leaning Resources Centre would include the following types or areas:

(i)   Diagnostic and Evaluation Centre.
(ii) Prescriptive Programming and Modules and Materials Development Centre.
(iii) Computer Terminal Areas.
(iv) Seminar Rooms.
(v) Conference Rooms.
(vi) Instrumental Skills Development Centre.
(vii)Library- Media Resources Centre.
(viii)Graphics Arts Centre (Photographic and Television Production).
(ix)Recording Rooms.
(x)Large Group Presentation and Demonstration Areas.
(xi) Per forming Arts Centre (a mini-theatre).
(xii)Visual Arts Centre.
(xiii)Science and Invention Laboratory.

The learning resources centre varies in size and functions ranging from a segment of a room to an

entire complex of buildings, depending on the objectives, curricular emphasis, number and qualifications of clients and the financial ability of the centre. In the same vein, each of the areas mentioned above vary in size according to functions and the number of learners to be accommodated at a time.

(b) Resources and Equipment

A wide range of audio-visual media materials, multi-media kits, games, manipulative and realia are available in the Learning Resources Centre complex. Also the centre is equipped with non-instructional equipment such as furniture, cabinets, study carrels, book and equipment carts, room dividers and file cabinets.

The Instrumental Skills Development Centre is equipped with study carrels and a wide range of audio-visual equipment, teaching machines, multi-level kits, programmed learning devices, models, bulletin boards, multi-media materials and kits, realia, collections, diorama, study prints, computers, photocopiers, artifacts, Closed-Circuit-Television (CCTV) and video-tapes, micro-teaching console etc. All the instructional equipment and resources in the centre are geared specifically toward the development of the instrumental skill.

(c) Organisation and Management

Adewoyin (1991) suggests that a standard learning resources centre should be headed by a Director who is either a specialist in Educational Technology or Library Studies; and that the centre be divided into four sections or units thus:
(i) Production Services Unit,
(ii) Instruction Services Unit,
(iii) Technical Services Unit, and
(iv) Administrative Service Unit.

An Assistant Director heads each of the units.

1. The Production Services Unit

Headed by an Assistant Director, other personnel in the unit include photographers, graphic artists, sculptors, ceramists, painters, sound recording crew, television crew, cinematographers, printers, designers etc.

The mode of operation in this unit is product and process oriented, i.e. production of materials and learning packages; and acquisition of skills in the production, monitoring of teachers in the classroom; advising and guiding teachers. The unit produces a wide range of materials such as slides, transparencies, charts, maps, models, mock-ups, dioramas, puppets, cyclo-teachers, video tapes/cassettes, audio tapes/cassettes, facsimiles, and Computer-Assisted Instruction Software etc.

2. The Instruction Services Unit

Headed by an Assistant Director, the unit renders multi-disciplinary services in the provision of instruction. It assists subject-matter specialists in diagnosing classroom problems relating to teaching, teachers, learning and learning problems, methodological problems, evaluation etc. Constituting the core of the unit are Instructional Developers, Media Specialists, Curriculum experts.. Sometimes the unit organises seminars, workshops, conferences and symposia.

3. The Technical Services Unit

This unit is charged with the responsibility of repairing, servicing and maintaining media' materials in the centre. The staff in this unit include technicians, engineers, educational technologists as well as other support personnel.

4.   **The Administrative Services Unit**

   The unit is responsible for the general welfare and management of the resource specialists, support personnel, as well as equipment and materials. Specifically, the unit is responsible for the day-to-day administration, appointment, promotion and discipline and general welfare of the staff in the centre. The Resource specialists in this unit include media administrators, librarians, media specialists, accountants, auditors, purchasing officers, clerks, typists and other support personnel like cleaners, drivers, gardeners, security guards etc.

Learning Resources Centres and Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

   Learning resources centres have grown rapidly in popularity since the establishment of the Abadina Media Centre in 1974 in Ibadan, and the National Educational Technology Centre, Kaduna in 1977. Basically the Learning Resources Centre is an integral element of curriculum development and instruction that facilitates the flexibility required to manipulate the teaching - learning environment to the advantage of individual learners. In the centre, a wide range of human resources (media Specialists), audio-visual media materials and physical facilities are pooled together and harmoniously blended for higher surrender value. Outside the primary functions of revolutionalising learning, the learning resources centre could be re-positioned to serve as a revenue-yielding outlet for the organisation that sets it up by commercializing some of its services and products.

   Firstly, beside co-ordinating and providing learning resources related services for students and teachers, the centre can be made to provide consultancy services to the general public on a wide range of areas related to instructional design, mediated teaching, curriculum development, media production and media technical services etc. The calibre of professionals and technicians that make up the learning resources centres would facilitate this.

  A number of physical facilities abound in the centre, which could yield revenue for economic rehabilitation and reliance. These include:

(i) Computer Terminals or Centres

(ii) Seminar rooms

(iii) Conference rooms

(iv) Performing Arts centres

(v) Recording rooms. Etc.

   These facilities can be rented out to the general public for use, so long as it does not interfere with the primary programmes of the centre.

   In the same vein, the centre's media production, resources and equipment and other related services could be commercialised. These include audio-visual media materials, photocopiers, computer services, photographic and television production services, technical services like media production; and repairs, servicing and maintenance of media materials.

   The centre could organise workshops and seminars for governmental and non-governmental organisations on instructional design, media utilization, curriculum development and other areas in line with its operations. Like the National Educational Technology Centre in Kaduna, a well staffed and equipped centre can run certificate and diploma courses on various aspects of media production such as audio-visual aids, educational television, and radio broadcasting, photographic, and cinematographic services etc.

   To boost the revenue-yielding venture of the centre, the administrative set up of the centre should be re-organised to include a Business/Commercial Service Unit, headed by a specialist in Business Management and/or Marketing. The mercantile activities of the centre should be well advertised in both print and electronic media.

Conclusion

The foregoing presents the learning resources centre as an area or complex of areas equipped with a diversity of print and non-print materials, audio-visual equipment, and programmed instruction. It is designed to accommodate various learning styles and needs both through physical design and through the application of systematic process approach to individualisation of instruction. It operates as a system made up of a set of interrelated factors that work together to produce a learning outcome. It thus comprises people, properties and processes.

In order to make the centre self-sustaining and to achieve society's manifest goal of economic reliance, the learning resources centre must as a matter of necessity veer from its traditional role to accommodate some revenue yielding concerns. In the face of dwindling government's allocation to educational and other essential sectors, it becomes imperative for educational agencies like the I.RC to be inward looking and chart a course for her economic reliance.

In view of the richness of the human and material resources that abound in the centre, a well-planned business programme that would tap the rich potentials of the centre's resources will yield the expected dividend that will serve as a catalyst for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

It must however be stressed that care must be taken to plan the activities of the centre so that its economic concern does not overrun its primary duties of providing for, and managing learning.

References

Adewoyin, J. A. (1991). *Introduction to Educational Technology.* Ibadan: Ade-Olu Press Ltd.

Agun, I. (1977). Strategies for Developing Resources Centres in Nigerian Secondary Schools. *Nigerian Educational Forum. 1* (8) 5-15.

Bennie, F. (1985). *Learning Centres: Development and Operation.* New Jersey; Educational Technology Publications.

Brunner, J. (1964). *Process of Education,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Cole, H. P. (1972).

Process Education. New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications. Hostrop, R. W. (1973).

Education Inside the Library-Media Centre. Connecticut: Linnet Books.