

Dual-use school/community libraries in South Africa

a new focal point

HELGA FRASER

Librarian, Research Section

South Africa has a significant backlog in the provision of adequate public library services, especially in the more remote rural areas of the country. At the same time most government-funded schools have a woeful lack of school libraries, which are needed to support the school curriculum by providing the necessary resources for both teachers and learners.

In an attempt to find a solution to this problem, renewed focus has been given to the possibility of combining school libraries with public libraries. High-level negotiations were conducted between the Provincial Treasury, the head of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport of the Western Cape, as well as the head of the Western Cape Education Department. With this in mind, the newly established Research Section of the Western Cape Library Service was tasked with providing a situational analysis of the state of school libraries in the Western Cape and to identify possible areas of collaboration between school and public libraries.

In the light of South Africa's very low literacy and numeracy levels amongst primary school learners, as shown in the results of the *Annual National Assessment* from 2011 and 2012 (only 31% of all learners could achieve more than 50% in their literacy

tests in 2011), the provision of school libraries is critical. International research has proven conclusively that literacy levels are vastly improved when learners are exposed to books and information resources from a young age.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is currently no funding at all for qualified school librarian posts in South African schools. In addition, finding qualified staff, not only for school libraries but also for public libraries, is becoming more and more of a challenge as librarianship could now be regarded as a 'scarce skill'.

Research has shown that only 7% of all schools in South Africa have functional school libraries, thus depriving millions of learners of access to information and literature resources. According to the community-based NGO Equal Education, a national roll-out of functional libraries in South Africa to catch up with the backlog would cost an estimated R12 billion. The Western Cape is better placed with 52% of its schools having functional school libraries (*NEIMS report 2011*).

This lack of school libraries is affecting both teachers and learners as well as the staff of public libraries, whose resources are being stretched as learners who seek information for their projects and assignments (or even just a quiet place to study), overcrowd these facilities. Yet, librarians play an important role in teaching learners from a young age the lifelong skill of

information retrieval.

One possible model to overcome this backlog is that of a dual-use school/community library. This model, which is defined as 'a common facility from which library services are provided to two ostensibly different communities of users' (Haycock, 2006), has been looked at worldwide for the last 30 years, and substantial research has been undertaken to find a 'best practice' model. In Sweden, for example, 25% of all public libraries are at present combined with school libraries (Swedish Arts Council, 2010).

Research has shown that only 7% of all schools in South Africa have functional school libraries, thus depriving millions of learners of access to information and literature resources

The advantages of such a model seem obvious: an improved collection and access to electronic databases through Internet connectivity for the facility, extended service hours, professional staffing where there was none before and the creation of a centre for community involvement and lifelong learning.

Most rural areas do not have a community library, but the **National Education Infrastructure Management System Report** of 2011 shows that in the Western Cape 387 schools without libraries have indeed been provided with a venue that could be utilised for this purpose.

There are, of course, also disadvantages, for example, that adult members of the community might not want to use a school facility during school hours: the security of the learners might be put at risk through 'unvetted' members of the community entering the facility; and sharing resources which are not suitable for both groups of library users. Another problem can be posed by the difference in purpose and approach of school librarians and public librarians in their occupation (Haycock, 2006).

However, the idea that a dual-use library is a huge cost saver has been proven wrong, (Nassimbeni, 2012). The aim of

dual-use school/
community libraries
work best in small
communities that
serve a population
of less than 10,000



▲ *Klapmuts Public School Library is an example of a very successful model of dual-use libraries*

collaboration between departments should rather be to establish a well-resourced, well-functioning school library as well as a well-resourced, well-functioning public library.

There is consensus in all scientific literature that certain prerequisites are needed to make school/community libraries a success. These conditions are:

- ▶ dual-use school/community libraries work best in small communities that serve a population of less than 10,000
- ▶ the facility must be located in a convenient, visible location and a separate area must be provided for adult users
- ▶ formal planning has to take place by a single, representative board and a written legal agreement, clearly outlining functions and responsibilities of all stakeholders must be drawn up, including clear guidelines on how capital outlay, staff salaries and operational costs will be funded
- ▶ the library should be part of a larger network or regional system
- ▶ the facility should be run by a well-qualified, motivated librarian who has the full support of the principal and teaching staff of the school.

The Western Cape currently has 20 fully

functioning dual-use school/community libraries, operating either from Wheelie Wagons, container libraries, prefabricated buildings or existing classrooms in schools. Successful examples are, amongst others, Pelican Park Public Library, Klapmuts Public School Library, Nieuwe Drift Wheelie Wagon, Rudolf Balie Memorial Library and Masiphumelele Public Library. Two dual-use libraries were in the top three libraries with the highest circulation per member during 2012: Vermaaklikheid WW (184 books per member per year) and Rudolf Balie Memorial Library (83 books per member per year).

Dual-use school/community libraries will become more and more a focal point in library service provision in South Africa. In the **National Guidelines for School and Information Services Policy** (published by the Department for Basic Education in March 2012), this model is given as one of the options schools can adopt to make provision for library and information services for schools and the wider community. A document for *Strategic Guidelines for Collaboration between Community Libraries and Schools 2013 -2015* drafted by the Department of Basic Education, is currently awaiting input from all role players in the

Dual-use school/ community libraries will become more and more a focal point in library service provision in South Africa

education and library and information science field.

References

- Department of Basic Education. *National Assessment Report* (Public ordinary schools). 2011. Date visited: 30 January 2013.
- Department of Basic Education. *National Education Infrastructure Management System Report*. May 2011.
- Department of Basic Education. **National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services**. 2012.
- Department of Basic Education. *Strategic guidelines for collaboration between community libraries and schools 2013 – 2015*. (Draft). 2013.
- Equal Education: We can't afford not to**. Cape Town, 2010.
- Hart, G. **The 'tricky business' of dual-use school community libraries: a case study in rural South Africa**. (Online). <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/libr.2011.61.issue-3/libr.2011.018/libr.2011.018.xml>. 2011. Date visited: 28 January 2013.

- Haycock, K. *Dual-use libraries: guidelines for success*. In **Library Trends** 54(4) 2006. pp. 488-500.
- Nassimbeni, M. *The synergy between school and public libraries: the South African perspective*. Presentation given at the 14th Annual LIASA Conference, Durban, 2012.
- Swedish Arts Council. **Kulturradet - school libraries** 2008. Stockholm, 2010. Date visited: 12 March 2012.
- Western Cape Library Service. *School libraries in the Western Cape – a situational analysis*. Cape Town, 2012.
- Western Cape Library Service. *Dual purpose school/community libraries in the Western Cape*. Cape Town, 2012.

Isishwankathelo

UMzantsi Afrika usasilela ekunikeni inkonzo eyiyo neyaneleyo yamathala eencwadi oluntu, ingakumbi kwiindawo ezisemaphandleni zelizwe lethu. Izikolo ezininzi ezifumana inkxaso-mali kurhulumente nazo zikwimeko embi nengabukekiyo, ekufanele zibekhona ngenjongo yokuxhasa ikharithyulam. Ngokwangoku zizikolo zaseMzantsi Afrika ezisi-7% ezinamathala eencwadi asebenzayo, oko kwehlutha izigidi zabafundi ilungelo kulwazi nelamaziko oncwadi. NgokoMbutho ongengokaRhulumente i-Equal Education kungatya izigidigidi ezingama-R12 ukulungisa lo monakalo. ENtshona Koloni zizikolo ezingama-52 % ezinamathala eencwadi asebenzayo.

Amathala eencwadi asebenza kabini athi engawesikolo abe engawoluntu angayilungisa le ngxaki. Okulungileyo ngoku koku: Ingqokelela yoncwadi nezinye izixhobo zamathala eencwadi eziphuculiweyo nethuba lokusebenzisa uvimba weenkukacha wekhompyutha osebenza nge-intanethi, iiyure ezandisiweyo zonikezelo lweenkonzo, abasebenzi abawufundeleyo umsebenzi, ukumiselwa kweziko lothatho nxaxheba loluntu nokukhuthazwa kokufunda okungapheliyo.

Uphando lubonisa ukuba oku kulandelayo kuyafunela ukwenza amathala esikolo noluntu abe yimpumelelo:

- ▶ Amathala eencwadi asebenza kubini asebenza ngcono kuluntu oluncinci olunabantu abangaphantsi kwama-10 000 ngobukhulu.
- ▶ Isakhiwo esi mayibe sisakhiwo esifikelekayo, nesibonakalayo sibe nendawo eyodwa elungiselelwe abantu abadala abayisebenzisayo.
- ▶ Zibe neenkqubo ezicacileyo nemisebenzi eqondakalayo kubo bonke abathathi nxaxheba nezikhokelo ezizizo zokusetyenziswa kwemali, imivuzo yabasebenzi, iyakuxhaswa ngemali yokuhlawula abasebenzi neyokwenza imisebenzi yeli thala.
- ▶ Ithala eli leencwadi malibe yinxalenye yamanye amathala okanye libe yinxalenye yeenkqubo zommandla lowo.
- ▶ Kufanele ilawulwe ngumsebenzi wethala leencwadi oqeqeshelwe oko nokwaziyo ukuwenza lo msebenzi ngokuncomekayo nozakuxhaswa yinqununu notitshala besikolo eso.

INtshona Koloni inamathala eencwadi angama-20 asebenza kubini nasele esebenza ngokugcweleyo, amanye asebenza kwii-Wheelie Wagon, amanye ngamathala eencwadi azikhonteyina, izakhiwo eziziprifebhu okanye iklasi ezikhoyo ezikolweni ezitshintshwe zaba ngamathala eencwadi njengethala leeNcwadi I Pelican Park Public, iThala leeNcwadi yeSikolo soLuntu iKlapmuts, iNieuwe Drift Wheelie Wagon, iThala leeNcwadi iRudolf Balie Memorial neThala leeNcwadi loLuntu iMasiphumelele. Isibini samathala eencwadi asebenza kubini aphumelele kukhuphiswano lamathala eencwadi amathathu angawona anamalungu ababoleka iincwadi ezililani eliphezulu kunamanye kwi-2011 - iVermaaklikheid WW(iincwadi zibe ngama-184 kwilungu ngalinye ngonyaka) neThala leeNcwadi iRudolf Balie Memorial (iincwadi zibe ngama-83 kwilungu ngalinye ngonyaka).