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The Role of Librarians in the Implementation of the National Policy of Education

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Abstract

The library profession is one that serves the educational system of any nation, therefore both the educational and library systems must be in nexus if effective and efficient formulation and implementation of policies will be established. The impact of the library can be felt at all levels in the education sector, starting from the grass root, that is, School libraries in primary and secondary schools to the Academic libraries in the tertiary institutions. Hence the importance of the library in the educational development of a country cannot be over-estimated.

The library policy objectives have not been difficult to identify yet elements of the most authoritative of all, that is, National Policy of Education (NPE); which were approved on recommendations by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) is grossly non-implemented. This paper is a position paper which reviews the aims of the NPE and the roles librarians play in its implementation. The issues to be critically analyzed are the national policy on education, the roles of librarians in its implementation, school library establishment, inspection and administration.

Key words: National Policy on Education (NPE), Policy Implementation, School Libraries

Introduction

Policies are written agreement meant to be followed to the latter for the purpose of accomplishment of specific tasks. They are standing plans that provide guidelines for decision making. According to Adomi (2008) a policy is a deliberate plan of action intended to guide decision and achieve rational outcome(s). Policies especially those that have to do with libraries need to be written down with adequate and accurate information with all consortiums involved, drawing up the policies that will be beneficial to all. It is in recognition of this that O'Reilly and Robert (1977) as cited by Omagbemi, Odunewu and Osifeso (2005) opined that a system must accurately sense its relevant environment to process information to make policies, co-ordinate and control its sub-units and its members for it to survive. They concluded that policy makers in an ideal situation would select

information from those sources perceived to offer the highest quality of information. They further postulated that there is a positive correlation between the quality of information needed by policy makers and policy effective performance.

According to Omagbemi, Odunewu and Osifeso (2005) policy and decision making involve accurate, effective, and timely consideration of facts before a policy is arrived at. They further stated that a policy arrived at with limited, jaundiced information is more likely of failure and crisis which may bring the society for which it is made to serious disadvantages. In their own view, Oyeniyi and Olaifa, (2013) stated that a government policy is an aggregation of a people's collective hopes, wishes and aspiration. To this extent, the quality of government is measured by the number of policies successfully implemented.

Oyeniyi and Olaifa, (2013) further noted that "the problems connected with public policy implementation are intertwined with basic economic and political conditions. Government form policies in order to improve the quality of life of the governed, but they are often restricted by poor implementation processes due to weak extractive capacity of the state, in relation to the economy, as well as by the dissipation of any resources.

The role of librarians in policy implementation of the NPE will be looked at under the following sub-heading;

- National Policy on Education, an overview
- The Roles of Librarians in Implementing the National Policy on Education
- School Library Establishment, Inspection and Administration

The National Policy on Education: An Overview

The NPE came about as a result of the National Curriculum Conference held in quest for a new national education. Participants at the conference reviewed the educational curriculum in Nigeria and agreed that the then education system which was introduced by the British government had become irrelevant to national needs and aspirations. The quest for a NPE started by National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1969 with a nationwide consultation of experts from educational ministries, voluntary agencies and international organization. Later in 1973, there was another national seminar organised by the NERDC under the Chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebo, which gave rise to the National

Policy on Education in 1977. (Akangbou 1985; Bello 1986; Okoroma 2000) as cited by Okoroma (2006).

However, since the first edition in 1977, subsequent editions of the policy have been published. The policy is now in its seventh edition published in 2014. The subsequent editions were successively revised in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th edition, and published in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2013 respectively. Theses revisions were necessitated by the following changes and innovations:

- (a) the introduction of open and distance learning programmes
- (b) introduction of information and communication technology into the school curriculum
- (c) repositioning science, technical and vocational education in the scheme of national educational for optimum performance;
- (d) prescription of minimum number of subject to taken by SSCE candidates; and
- (e) general contextual change to reflect the state of professional practice in education, among others

The national policy on education NPE is a document through which the Federal Government avowed its commitment to the nation's education system. The NPE states in clear language the government's intention to provide education at all levels for all citizenry nationwide.

Bello, Olanrewaju, and Ango (nd), quoting Ike (1983) examined the role of school libraries in the successful implementation of the then new NPE, listed the following as the aims of school libraries:

- (a) To introduce the school children to expanding world of knowledge
- (b) To develop in school children, a life-long reading-habit, including the use of library materials for pleasure, relaxation, self-development and reference purpose.
- (c) To teach school children to learn on their own, without the aid of teachers.
- (d) To support the curriculum of schools.
- (e) To support the creative activities of the pupils and their teachers.

The Role of Librarians in Implementing the National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education (2014), from the first to its present seventh edition, states that school libraries shall be established in all schools. This is very important because the place of school libraries in providing a good foundation for inculcating a good knowledge base for both staff and students has long been acknowledged.

The most recent NPE (2014) allot the school library under section four, (No19c, pg. 12) as follows:

19c. The following educational services shall be provided:

- School Library;
- Basic Health Scheme;
- Counseling;
- Educational Resource centre;
- Special teachers of particular subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Physical education, Language Arts(in relation to English French, Sign language and Nigerian Languages), Librarian, Music, Fine Art and Home Economics.

The NPE from the first edition noted that libraries are one of the most important education services. The first edition of NPE (1981), emphasized that every State Ministry of Education used(SME) needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service (pg. 31). Olayemi and Aina (2007) noted that with these statements, the provision of school libraries in the education system has been accorded the needed recognition in the NPE. Oyeniyi and Olaifa, (2013) noted that the library can also help in gathering feedback on government policies from the library users. If the government can get adequate feedback on her policies, it will help her in the formulation of new policies as well as improving existing ones.

From the 2014 edition of the NPE quoted above, it is stressed that in pursuance of the educational goals, personnel is very important, hence, special teachers of particular subjects are needed and this also includes a librarian. Librarians are classified together with special teachers; this implies that they are equipped with the pedagogical skills of an educationist. This is in accordance with the views of Olayemi and Aina (2007) that opined that many

studies published on school libraries in Nigeria identifies personnel as one of the major problems facing library development. Quoting Fadero (1970), Fayose (1980), Opaleke (1996), Odunsanya and Amusa (2002) noted that this might be due to ignorance. They noted that the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), Nigeria (1983) enumerated the duties of an educationist as distinct from a teacher to include;

- The development, implementation, revision of library policies, planning of the library budget and training the permanent library staff and the library personnel.
- Duties with other teachers and personnel are to coordinate the library system with the curriculum, publish the library, organizing the process of selection of books, conducting programmes of reading guidance, coordinating library programmes.
- With the assistants, teacher librarian seeing to the organization, that
 is cataloguing and classification of library resources, supervision,
 maintenance of library record and implementation of a successful
 curriculum system with library improvement.

Therefore librarians were meant to stand firm and take their place in the helms of the educational affair. The erstwhile Registrar/CEO of Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), Dr. Victoria Okojie noted during the 5th induction of certified librarians held at Abuja, on the 16 September 2014, that" as at date, Nigeria has no policy in place for its library services sector, hence the need for a well-crafted policy that will provide a framework for the coordinated and strategic development of libraries in Nigeria. Also the former Minister of State for Education, Barr. Nyesom Wike noted that "a well-articulated policy for the sector will provide a clear direction for the stakeholders to contribute to national growth and development." Wike, who was represented by his special assistant on special duties, Mr. Lambert Opara congratulated the LRCN for taking the initiative to develop a library and information services policy for Nigeria.

Itsekor (2011) also opined that the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) is meant to implement the policy guiding the provision of libraries with the support of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), National Library of Nigeria (NLN), and the LRCN. Itsekor

(2011) stated that librarians should see themselves as stakeholders that can restructure and ensure the implementation of the education policies. She further reiterated that they should make their voices heard. The Nigerian Library Association could assist the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and the government to develop the education system of Nigeria.

Bello, Olanrewaju, and Ango, quoting Fayose (1971) remarked that in the same vein, just as the academic library has come to be regarded as an intellectual center in any higher institution, the school library, by all intents and purposes should be so seen and understood. Thus, the school library should be conceived as the centre of all school's curriculum planning and development. Therefore NLA, LRCN, and NLN should start from school libraries and media resource centres and proceeds to develop all other types of libraries.

Agada (1997) stated that although the role of libraries in national development worldwide is not self-evident, Nigerian libraries have been dogged with challenges of recognition, funds and public support. Itsekor (2011) quoting Ifidon (1997) in his article on collection development of university libraries, stated that too many meetings, conferences and seminars are held, but there are little evidences that decisions are acted upon, or the recommendations implemented (Agada 1997).

Unagha (2008) further noted that efforts by governments to promote education and literacy in Nigeria have failed because there was no provision for school libraries in the implementation of these programmes. There is need for the policy to emphasize the planning of library infrastructure and provision of information resources. Unagha (2008) averred that a library is more than a building, but appropriate buildings are necessary, because it is difficult to develop a library without a location. A school library is part of a school. It should have space for the collection, and should not share space with other things. Many government and privately owned school libraries in Nigeria do not have a location or viable infrastructure. They are either located in the administrative / teacher's office or in the head teacher or principal's office. In such a situation, the pupils/ students will not feel free to make use of them. Unagha (2008) further noted that the school renovation and construction project of the UBE programme did not include provision of space for libraries. Failing to provide this essential facility will work against the objectives of UBE and NPE in Nigeria.

Establishment, Inspection, Administration and Resources of School libraries

Libraries are places where users get education, enlightenment, recreation and entertainment for all ages and all people. It is especially very important to introduce children to books and information resources very early, that is during their infancy or formation ages of their lives. Research has shown that half of a person's intelligence potential is developed by age four and that early childhood interventions can have a lasting effect on intellectual capacity, personality, and social behaviour (UNICEF nd). It is therefore very important that all categories of users are catered for and provided with the right information resource, at the right time and in the right format.

The school library establishment, inspection, administration and resources will be looked under the following sub-headings;

- (a) School Library Establishment
- (b) School Library Inspection
- (c) School Library Administration
- (d) School Library Resources

(a) School Library Establishment

In Nigeria, the school library and information services in the education system are in three levels namely Federal, State and Local government. These levels must work in synergy to ensure access to quality library and information services for all. Ugboma (2007) however noted that school libraries are few and unevenly spread over the country. Only the Federal government and few private schools can boast of libraries, if there are any. Libraries should be established in all schools, the environment should determine the size and infrastructure of the library, though there should be a minimum acceptable standard.

Taking an example from the National Guidelines for school libraries and information services, Republic of South Africa, the Minister for Basic Education, Mrs. A. M. Motshekga asserted that the vision for the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is that all schools will have well-resourced and functioning school library and information services, which will

contribute towards ensuring that all learners and teachers are information literate and independent lifelong learners and readers.

The National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services for South Africa (2012) states that the physical teaching and learning environment is being broadly conceived as comprising a school infrastructure which includes school libraries – hence the provision of centralised school libraries is located within a holistic context of the provision of school infrastructure. All schools must have a library and information service that meets the needs of the users and appropriate models of library provision is considered, depending on the size of the school.

Motshekga (2012) was of the opinion that "given current backlogs in the country, the Department of Basic Education DBE has taken a developmental approach towards the provision of these services. These service options range from providing classroom libraries and cluster, mobile and school community libraries, to a fully-fledged library and information service in all schools. This approach will assist the education system in managing the huge financial, infrastructural, human and material resources, and the logistical implications of working towards a fully functional library and information service for schools.

(b) School Library Inspection

Itsekor (2011) also noted that amongst the different types of libraries in Nigeria, the school library is the one faced with more challenges in the nation and it is also the most crucial, as it forms the basis on which other knowledge are built upon. School library and information services should support dynamic learning programmes in the information age. (The National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services for South Africa, 2012). Ugboma (2007) however noted that the culture and habits of accessing and using information is formed at the early stages of a child's life. The school library must therefore be introduced to the child at a very young age. Frantsi, Kolu and Salminen (2002) stated that the policy on school library services must be formulated to define goals, priorities and services in relation to the school's curriculum; they also suggested that the school library must be organized and maintained according to professional standards.

The NPE, if it must be implemented must take the issue of school inspection very seriously. Though schools are being inspected by FME and SME, there seem not to be much inspection at LME. During the inspection also there must be librarians and all stakeholders involved in determining if acceptable standards are met. School library inspection should be viewed in relations with the school curriculum for an effective implementation. The section of the policy which states that libraries should be established in every school must also follow up with having a school library hour for effective curricula delivery which will consequently lead to an effective teaching and learning processes.

(c) School Library Administration

The overriding principles of the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services for South Africa for resource provision are that each and every learner and teacher needs access to a range of quality resources that are age appropriate, current and relevant, and which inculcate a love of reading and encourage the enquiring mind. Furthermore, the employment of a school librarian must be taken very seriously. Many school proprietors employ school certificate holders to man the libraries and hence no skill is used in handling the information resources. Olayemi and Aina (2007) quoting Elaturoti (1983) observed lack of qualified personnel, inadequate school library programmes and a deplorable state of school library development. They also quoted Odusanya (1988) noting lack of professionals, inadequate funding and gross neglect of school library services by government.

School library resources, including digital resources, are meant to be accessible throughout the school and after school day and administered by a knowledgeable person (teacher-librarian). Just as the information needs of teachers, students and pupils must be taken into consideration when planning for school libraries, the teacher-librarian must also be carefully selected. This information age has become very diverse in the sense that, it is characterized by the influx of information and modern information gadgets and tools. Adetoro (2006) posits that books and audio-visual supplements and enrich the teaching and learning situation in schools. There is need for a library personnel who has the right qualification, knowledge and passion for the job and the users. The school librarian must be one who is willing and interested to learn get more educational training and develop overtime. He/ She must be an astute reader, learner and writer. He should be able to get trained and learn to

operate modern information gadgets. We presently have many sophisticated tools, like computers, Ipad, and tablets which pupils and students learn to operate very easily without being taught and they use them to read and study.

(d) School Library Resources

Unagha (2008) opined that to ensure that library use becomes a lifelong habit, it is necessary that the national curricula for primary and secondary schools include library use education modules. Dike (1993) however stated the need for storyhour programmes, noting that storytelling, like reading aloud introduces children to the possibilities of language, thereby laying the foundation for reading. The information resources acquired for the library will go a long way to incite the pupils to use the library and develop a good reading habit.

Children usually enjoy colourful, pictorial information resources, which are in both print and non print format. Also, younger children need to have bold text with clearly written and simple to read language, which they can easily understand, while the text font size for older children can be smaller but easy to understand language for different categories of age group. Therefore, the information provider must take into consideration, pupil and students age when choosing information resources for them.

ICT have brought to bear many colourful and attractive interfaces that will make both children and adult user want to use information. Sadeh (2008) noted that first, users clearly prefer familiar and easy-to-learn discovery interfaces. The typical searcher relies on the internet to find many types of content, not just scholarly information but text to accomplish many everyday tasks; hence, such users expect scholarly interfaces to provide an experience similar to the interfaces with which they are most familiar.

Gone are the days when students, pupils and teachers use black or chalk board, textbooks, notebooks, pen and pencil to teach and learn. In today's world, teachers have access to use white board with different colours of pen for emphasis while teaching; they have also upgraded to use computers, while students also use computers, tablets, Ipad and many other accessories as earlier mentioned to learn and get more information.

Librarians have both the training and experience to select information resources that best suit the age and type of users of information resources. With the proliferation of ICT, children and adult are being exposed to variety of information sources, but they need to be properly guided in their choice of information seeking and usage.

Challenges of Non-Implementing of School Library Policy

Etim (2010) stated that generally, the policy-makers in Nigeria exhibited inadequate recognition of information as a vital component in the process of policy analysis and the lack of a tradition of integrating information analysis into policy analysis. Oyeniyi and Olaifa, (2013) however stated that in line with the challenges of implementing government policies, Nigerian libraries and information centres are saddled with the responsibility of safe-guarding the information of today for a better tomorrow. In a bid to ensuring the effective implementation of government policies, libraries and information centres are expected to play a pivotal role.

UBEC (Universal Basic Education Commission) in the Summary of Deliverables 2009-2012 from Matching Grant Funds, there has been an alarming decline in the construction of Libraries from 40 in 2009 to a very low number 3 in 2012. Also, Library furniture that was provided in 2009 was 219,355 relatively high to the alarmingly low number in 2012, which is 24. Although, almost 1.5 million textbooks were purchased, the purchase of library books has dropped to 54,600 in 2012 while no reference materials in form of dictionaries was provided in 2011 and 2012. The case is pathetic and calls for a redress.

The government through the Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS), which is the flagship of office of the Senior Special assistant to the President on MDGs identified the importance of construction and equipping of libraries, computer centres, and instructional materials like textbooks, writing materials among others to help improve the educational sector. (*Education for All 2015*)

From scholarly publication and personal observations, many public and privately owned schools seem not have libraries, and a few of those schools that have libraries / reading rooms, are placed under lock and key and are non-functional. Olayemi and Aina (2006) Sambo (1998) observed that for quality education to take place, good teaching and effective learning requires the support system of good school libraries. He however noted that this is

perhaps the greatest single weakness in the Nigerian primary school system. In his opinion the personnel and professionals are available but what is needed is the infrastructures and information resources.

Nigeria education systems have been faced with challenges of non-functional libraries, inadequate teacher-librarians to man school libraries, lack of educational training for teacher-librarians, and lack of / inadequate supervision/ inspectorate of the library and information centres. This has invariably affected school libraries, information and resource centres and the education system. The formulation, decision-making, and implementation of the library policies by leadership and successive governments seems to be grossly neglected and the existing libraries, education system, media and information resource centres are in a state of dilapidation. Policies to establish libraries, which are meant to be implemented, are not put to use and this has also adversely affected every system and parastatal.

The curricula of education for students in both primary and secondary schools have been changed several times, from the time of the British colonial rule till present. Gusau (2008) opined that the British colonial rulers changed the educational system in operation in 1954 from 8-6-2-3 system to a new system of 6-5-2-3 that is 8years primary, 6years secondary, 2years higher school certificate and 3years university to 6years primary, 5years secondary, 2years higher school certificate and 3years University. From that time it has been changed twice by successive governments to 6-3-3-4 and presently the 9-3-4 system.

Frantsi, Kolu and Salminen (2002) stated that it seems that now at the beginning of the 21st century, schools and municipalities have understood the significance and functions of the school libraries in supporting teaching and learning as well as in developing the information management, reading and writing skills of the pupils. These make school libraries some of the most promising and inspiring places where teachers and pupils/students meet, but in cases where policies are not implemented, the education system will definitely be in chaos.

Conclusion and Recommendations

NLA should coordinate library day events at local, state and national levels to create an awareness of all types of libraries. They are already doing this at national level, more efforts

should be intensified to reach both states and local levels. All programmes about libraries should also well publicized in the media and internet, if we do not announce our work nobody will know what we are doing. Story hour programmes should be introduced in the school curriculum and the school library resource centres, should anchor this programme. Storytelling, book clubs, read aloud programmes will inspire a good habit reading habit in school children.

The LRCN, NLA and NLN should work in conjunction with the FME to lead and coordinate the regular feedback from the Federal, States and Local Education District in order to consult, and share expertise and ideas, jointly planned for. Issues on school libraries should be reported to the different heads and a round table meeting should be conducted on the information gotten from the feedbacks of school library programmes and projects at Federal, State and local level.

School inspectors are meant to collect and provide statistical data to the FME, such as the number of school libraries that are functioning in the nation, details regarding stock, levels of usage, connectivity, computers, budgets, but over the years there seem to be no record of such. Without implementation of library policies, planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating of school library and information services related projects in collaboration with the States library board will never be effectively done.

LRCN AND NLA should liaise with library schools of universities to offer training courses to teacher-librarians and teachers in the field of school library and information services, so as to award diplomas and degrees to teacher-librarian for effective and efficient service delivery. All schools must also have a qualified school librarian.

There is need for policies on libraries, education and information centres to be implemented. Nigeria has been faced with problems of non-functional libraries, information centres, poor education systems, poor decision making and poor implementation of policies. This has invariably affected effecting quality decision taking, adequate policy formulation and effective implementation of policies formulated.

Librarians should form consortium and partner with government bodies, departments, institutions and other relevant stakeholders, like Association of Book Publishers and Sellers and collaborate with other NGOs to publicize and promulgate the services of the school

media resource centre. Librarians can also engage with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), suppliers and coordinating bodies, such as the Publishers Association of Nigeria (PAN), African Publishers Association (APA) and the Nigeria Booksellers Association (NBA) and other role players in the field of Library and Information Science to enhance and market their services.

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