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Roles of Academic Libraries in National Development

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Abstract

The pride of any government is the attainment of higher value level of national development in such a way that its citizens would derive natural attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development there must be some pre-requisites, which include socio-political and economic stability for the development of academic libraries. The gap between the developed and the developing countries is not static or narrow but is continually widening. A large majority of the world's population in developing world lives in a state of poverty. The problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment and growing inequalities continue to face less developed countries, which Nigeria belongs. Hopes of accelerated development are difficult to realize. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stake holders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country of which if academic libraries are not well developed in which if it were being developed it would have fostered a good national development of its citizenry.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, National Development

Introduction

Libraries have been agents of change; they connect with people, strengthen communities and build assets of nation. The different types of libraries are committed to meeting the information needs of people for societal and common good of the nation. Academic libraries can create access to required information for the dwellers of the host communities (Itsekor, Asaolu and Osinulu, 2015).

It is the amount of information and the level of application to life that makes some nations developed, while others are developing and some yet still underdeveloped. Information accessibility and usage is the cutting edge amongst these nations. The more informed the citizenry of any nation, the more developed the nation becomes. Librarians, by collecting, organizing, storing and providing access to information, serve as change agents, helping organizations and individuals access and use information in order to develop more successful societies. Libraries are agents of change in all facet of life worldwide. Countries that have established libraries and embraced information have in no time risen above their contemporaries. An academic library is set up to meet the teaching, learning, research and information needs of the parent institution as well as impact the immediate community where the institution is resident through community impact initiative programmes. Academic libraries can help develop the community by providing access to relevant information through different channels. There are online libraries one can use at anytime of the day or night, with millions of books and periodicals with unlimited browsing, academic libraries can make access to such available to members of the community (Itsekor, Asaolu and Osinulu, 2015).

Educational institutions are the bedrock for human development since it produces the much required manpower to sustain a nation. The role of the library and educational institution in

support of literacy, national development and sustainable education is well recognized. The library is an integral part of educational system, and one of the most vital components for national development. In a foreward message on the 2014 Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) directory, the then Minister of Education in Nigeria, Dr. Shekaurau stated that the Library and Information Science occupies a vantage position in the educator sector and plays a strategic role in national growth and development. Dubicki (2013) in Omeluzor and Ogo (2018) stated that the primary goal of librarians is to work collaboration with the faculty in order to produce information literate students as graduates who can effectively utilize information literacy skills in the workplace.

Invariably, an informed society will contribute to the development of a nation as the availability and access to information resources would promote peaceful coexistence among the people as well as inclusiveness for sustainable development UNICEF (2017) and Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Timoye and Emeka-Ukwu (2017) in Omeluzor and Ogo (2018). The impact of the library would be felt greatly in the rural communities in Nigeria where most of the communities are agrarian, whose livelihood is dependent on farming and the art of making crafts. The library will help in breaking the jinx of ‘information poor’ among the rural people. Effective library and information services in the rural communities of Nigeria can enhance development and improve quality of education of the rural people. Quality access to information sources and services by the library users would engender acquisition of relevant skill and knowledge for national development.

21st Century Academic Libraries

Sibuyi, (2016) in Ogbonnaya, (2020) asserted that few libraries exist in a vacuum, accountable only to themselves. There is thus always a larger context for assessing academic library quality, that is, what and how well does the library contribute to achieving the overall goals of the parent constituencies? The major objective for academic libraries of 21st century especially in an environment of increasing economic pressure, structural change, and technological innovation, must be to align themselves with the structures of higher education and the criteria by which those institutions are judged. The literature of educational effectiveness is enormous and, like library managers, higher education administrators have borrowed heavily from the recent business methods of Total Quality Management. The micro-evaluation of academic libraries has given countless opportunities for detailed studies, yet still lacking are agreed-upon and objective ways to measure and incorporate library value into such processes as academic accreditation, educational assessment, and ratings of graduate programs.

Sibuyi, (2016) in Ogbonnaya, (2020), described academic library as a tool that avails people with knowledge, skill, technique and information which empowers them to know their rights and duties toward the family, society, and the nation. Library has helped in no small measure to improve the quality of life in any society. This could be seen in features exhibited through education which include removing poverty, safety and security against crime, prevention of wars and terrorism as well as commerce and trade. Others are maintenance of law and order, women empowerment, communications, and upliftment of economically weaker sections of the societies. One of the most important benefits of education in a society is that it improves the standard of living and assist individuals to contribute to the development of the nation/society.

Lochner and Moretti, (2004) in Ogbonnaya,(2020), expressed that library is a very important key that can be used to unlock many closed doors in a country. When a nation understands the imperative of library as a catalyst to development, such a nation would experience astronomic socio-economic growth in a short time. However, for a developing country like Nigeria, there is the need to realize how library can be used to improve the economy. When illiteracy is eradicated, the citizens become enlightened and this results in the right actions expected by a good citizen. It is noteworthy that once the citizens live aright, the country will be in better shape. Also, an educated person, who is transformed, cannot be found in the act of robbery, murder, kidnapping, rape, and other vices, thus making the nation a place of peace and comfort where economic development thrives This study intends to clarify the concepts of library, and national development with the intent to present the reciprocal benefits of one to the other.

Bawa (2016) in Ogbonnaya,(2020) national development is a comprehensive term used to refer to the development of every area of the lives of individuals and their nation. It is the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a nation which is achieved through strategies mapped out by the government.

National Educational Development Plans in Nigeria

Agbo and Onyekweodiri, (2014) asserted that development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for its citizenry. A large majority of the world's population are in the developing world. The problems of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, and growing inequalities continue to face less developed countries, which Nigeria belongs to. Hopes

of accelerated development are difficult to realize. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stakeholders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge human, material and natural resource endowments. This has greatly affected her quest for improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country. National development is essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of a country in order to successfully enhance the meaningful standard of living among the populace.

National Policy on Education (2013) in Ogbonnaya,(2020) expressed that the National Policy on Education in Nigeria in 2013 is an important document that has attractive plans for the educational system of the country in general and, in particular, for persons with a disability. It is anchored on Nigeria's philosophy on education as enunciated through the nation's objectives. Raheem, Isah, and Adedeji, (2018) as cited in Ogbonnaya,(2020) expressed that the problem of economic and social progress has been a major concern of many nations in both the developed and developing countries of the world. Thus, different nations adopt varied strategies in achieving economic and social progress. Marcellus, (2009) in Ogbonnaya,(2020) regarded development planning as the main strategy used by many governments and organizations to set their visions, missions, goals, and effective means of realizing development. Development planning has been a consistent phenomenon in Nigeria since 1946. The Nigerian government has aspired to achieve development through the use of various types of plans, namely short term (Annual Budget), medium, and long term plans. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which is the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the latest in the history of medium-term plans for the country and promises to surmount some of the problems that marred the success of previous plans.

Development planning in Nigeria can be classified under three eras. These are the Era of Fixed-Term Planning (1962-85), the Era of Rolling Plan (1990-1998), and the New Democratic Dispensation (1999 to date). The Era of Fixed Medium Term Plan (1962-1985) witnessed four successful plans in Nigeria. These are the First National Development Plan (1962-1968), the JORIND Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980), and the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985). The first plan covered the period 1962-63-1967-68 and provided for capital expenditure of 2.2 billion Naira. The implementation of the plan was extended to 1969-70 due to the Nigerian civil war. One major employment promotion scheme in the First National Development Plan was the establishment of the National Manpower Board (NMB) in 1962.

National Policy on Education (2013) in Ogbonnaya,(2020) asserted that the Second National Development Plan covers the period 1970-1974 with a capital expenditure of about 3 billion Naira. The Plan witnessed attempts to rectify some of the shortcomings of the first development plan. The planning machinery was strengthened, the need for public input was recognized by preceding the plan preparation by a national conference on economic development and reconstruction, and the need for inputs from various levels of government, ministries, and agencies especially relevant planning agencies like the National Manpower Board and Federal Office of Statistics, and an Advisory Body made up of representatives drawn from the universities, trade union, other ministries, and the private sector.

Federal Ministry of National Planning, (1981) as cited in Ogbonnaya, (2020) expressed that the Third National Development Plan began in 1975 with a plan total capital expenditure of 30 billion Naira. This was later revised to 43.3 billion Naira. In terms of sheer magnitude, the Third National Development Plan represented a major departure from its predecessors and

constituted a watershed in the country's planning experience. However, the government could only spend N29.43 billion out of the projected expenditure of N43.3 billion as reviewed. The Fourth National Development plan covers the period 1981-1985. The overriding aim of the plan is to bring about an improvement in the living conditions of the people. The Plan is the first plan to be formulated by a democratically elected government under a new constitution based on the presidential system of government. Again, with a projected capital expenditure of 82 billion, the plan is considerably bigger than all its predecessors. Thirdly, it is the first plan in which the local governments participated in its design and formulation. The Rolling plan era (1990-1998) The First National Rolling Plan covered the period 1990-1992. The main objective was to consolidate the achievements made so far in the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and address the pressing problems still facing the economy. One of the key priority programmes of the First National Rolling Plan was the strengthening of the on-going programmes of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE).

National Planning Commission, (2000) in Ogbonnaya, (2020) opined that the Second National Rolling Plan (1993-1995) marks the beginning of the second cycle of a three-year Rolling Plan. The general policy measures of the Second National Rolling Plan include tackling the observable lapses and inefficiencies in the operation of monetary and credit instruments, low level of capacity utilization of industries, and the rising trends of unemployment. The 1994/96 and the 1997/99 Rolling Plans have employment generation as its priority programmes. With the return to democratic governance in Nigeria, the new administration started development planning in 1999 with the initiation of a four-year medium-term plan document, the National Economic Direction (1999-2003).

Roles of Academic Libraries in National development

Jaiyeoba, (2007) is of the general belief that academic libraries plays a vital means in achieving development in all ramifications. Development has to do with qualitative and sometimes quantitative changes in the life of a people or an individual. At the national level, there is an improvement in the general well-being of the people while at the individual level, development implies activity, increased skill and capacity, self-discipline, greater freedom, responsibility, and material well-being. For some people, libraries are so abstract that it cannot have any impact on their practical life. Consequently, such people believe that libraries are irrelevant to the development. This misconception persists because of people's ignorance of what libraries are all about. They fail to realize that libraries are one of the most (if not the most) useful enterprises ever undertaken by man. This is evidence by human development, which shows that libraries have been the greatest force that has contributed in shaping human civilization. Hence, Owen Meredith, as quoted by Ireland (1884), argued that "It is, however, not to the museum, or the lecture-room, or the drawing-school, but to the library that we must go for the completion of our humanity. It is books that bear from age to age the intellectual wealth of the world."

Anyika, (2005) in Agbo, and Onyekweodiri, (2014) asserted that there have been enormous advances in human knowledge since the last century. Every field of human endeavor has had a quantum leap in advancement, leading to many discoveries and inventions, two of which are the internet and cloning, with their use and abuse. Along with the new knowledge have come new challenges. And these new developments have presented to the average citizen with a spectacle of the greatest confusion. People seldom stop to ponder that it is the business of libraries to bring order, clarity, and consistency into all this confusion. Here, libraries become

“an instrument used to organize knowledge, proffer a focus and then give the individual a sense of direction out of a maze of confusion.” Even at the individual level, libraries are a tool for the satisfaction of man’s curiosity. There is a great desire by man to know things. This urge motivates them to satisfy their curiosity. Their curiosity is extended everywhere and into everything. It is bounded only by the limitations of their imagination. Sometimes, one makes a breakthrough and finds answer to one’s enquiries but human progress does not consist in finding the answers and so ending the search, rather, it is in adjustment to the search itself. Life becomes nothing but a perpetual enquiry. We live by the results of the enquiry but we are never satisfied with them, and so while we accept them in order to exist, we also endeavour to continue the enquiry.

Anyika, (2005) in Agbo, and Onyekweodiri, (2014) asserted that library is “the working tool of inquisitive men. Library makes people more rational in their actions because one who knows the rational means will usually act in accordance with that means. Therefore, the presence of libraries in a society will certainly enhance positive human activity in that society. Libraries are also germane in educational development of a nation. This is done through their services and programs, introducing children to the habit and joy of reading and aiding scholastic and researchers in contributing their quota to the development. Students are supported with the aid of books and other relevant information to perform well in their academic work while teachers and lecturers get teaching aids from libraries to prepare useful lesson notes that will help them pass useful knowledge to their students (Pritchard, 1996).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Lawal and Oluwatoyin, (2011) observed that the pride of any government is the attainment of higher value level of national development in such a way that its citizens would derive natural attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development there must be some pre-requisites, which include socio-political and economic stability for the development of academic libraries. The gap between the developed and the developing countries is not static or narrow but is continually widening. A large majority of the world's population in developing world lives in a state of poverty. The problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment and growing inequalities continue to face less developed countries, which Nigeria belongs. Hopes of accelerated development are difficult to realize. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stake holders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country of which if academic libraries are well developed it will foster a good national development of its citizenry.

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