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# Towards Accelerated Development of Academic Library Services in Nigeria for National Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries established in tertiary institutions. They include libraries in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The roles of these libraries are similar and that is to effectively support institutions to attain the key functions of teaching, research and community service. These institutions are responsible for the production of middle and higher level manpower for national development. The extent to which they are able to effectively accomplish that task depends largely on how well their libraries are equipped with the relevant information resources.

According to the National Policy of Education (1998), the goals of tertiary education are to:

- 1) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- 2) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- 3) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- 4) Acquire both physical, intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- 5) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- 6) Forge and cement national unity; and
- 7) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Arising from the goals of tertiary education, the National Policy of Education (1998), specifies that university education will make optimum contribution to

national development by: Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;

1) Making professional courses contents to reflect our national requirements;

2) Making all students as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education to offer general study course such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism.

4) University research shall be relevant to the nation's developmental goals. In this regard, universities shall be encouraged to disseminate their research results to both government and industries. In the opinion of Okebukola (2009), in a developed society characteristic of developed economics to which Nigeria aspires, higher education plays a key role. It provides high level human resources for driving the economy and ensures rapid societal transformation. The greater the opportunity given to the citizenry for higher education, the more expansive the horizon for rapid social and economic development. The universities and their libraries are at the forefront of this mandate of production of the necessary manpower for national development since they provide the higher level manpower required for national development. It is no wonder therefore that Aguolu (2002), noted that the university library is the heart of the university. This is because, the academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depends largely upon the state of health and excellence of its library which is its lifeblood. This assertion is a reflection of an age long conviction by the British University Grants Committee (1921) which noted that:

The character and efficiency of a university may be gauged by its treatment of its central organ, the library. We regard the fullest provision (of funds) for library maintenance as the primary and most vital need in the equipment of a university. An adequate library is not only the basis of all teaching and study; it is the essential condition of research without which additions cannot be made to the sum of human knowledge.

It is obvious from the foregoing that universities have always had the mandate to produce higher level manpower for national development. Harbison and Myers (1964) opined that national development is the transformation of all aspects of life of a society - cultural, social, political and economic. Thus a well developed nation is usually associated with high income per capital, many employment opportunities, availability of cheap food and other necessary human requirements, better roads, housing, water, advancement, among others. This goes to buttress the opinion of Todaro (1979) and Onokerhoraye and Okafor (1994) that development is a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty and a high birth rate.

Education is a key factor in the concept of development and libraries are very important essential tools for attaining national objectives of human resource and economic development.

In order to achieve the indices associated with development, the human resource of a nation must be developed. This is because, it is the human resource in a nation that would manage the other available resources to achieve national development. It is perhaps in this regard that Harbison and Myers (1964) opined that human resource development is:

The process of increasing the knowledge, skills and the capabilities of all the people in society. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. In political terms, human resource development prepares people for adult participation in political process, particularly as citizens of democracy. From the social and cultural point of view, the development of human resources helps people to lead fuller and richer lives, less bound by traditions.

Still on the issue of human resource development, Akingbola (2009) noted that human resource development otherwise known as human capital development presupposes investment activities and processes that produce knowledge, skills, health or values that are embodied in people. Any effort to increase human knowledge, enhance skills and productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of individuals is an effort in human capital development. Herein lies the central place of tertiary education and hence academic libraries in the drive to achieve national development. The World Bank (2008) cited in Okebukola (2009), observed that there is a compelling body of research concluding that education is the main plank of economic development. A strand of evidence is presented by the example of more than half of the members of the league of the world top 15 economies, which, in spite of the thin dose of natural resources, boosted their economic power through harnessing the power of education, Japan and Korea present examples (Okebukola, 2009).

In the light of the foregoing, the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (NV2020) project of the Federal Government of Nigeria which is meant to identify key aspects of the Nigerian economy such as agriculture, the polity, infrastructure, education, manufacturing, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and bring them up to international standards in order for Nigeria to be one of the world's 20 leading economies by the year 2020 comes into focus. Since academic libraries are at the centre of teaching and research in the tertiary institutions where the necessary middle and higher level manpower are to be produced, to drive the Nigerian economy to achieve this tall goal of reaching the top 20 economies of the world by the year 2020, there arises the need to take another look at the aspects of concentration by the Vision 20:2020 document vis-a-vis the academic libraries which should provide the essential information for teaching and research expected to equip the human resources that would be required to facilitate government's achievement of this Vision 20:2020 goals. It is a well-known fact that you cannot give what you do not have, similarly, a nation cannot develop in isolation of her human resources and hence cannot rise above the level of knowledge, skills and capabilities of its human resources. This is the reason why it becomes imperative that items in the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 vision which for now makes it look more like a white elephant document devoid of the essential library component should be revisited. This is compelling at this stage in Nigeria because government after government have continued to pay lip service to the adequate funding and development of quality education required to produce the quality manpower to drive accelerated national development that is required to achieve NV 2020. (Anafulu, 1997; Zakari 1997; Iromantu, 1998; Okiy, 1998; Ojoade and Ochai, 2000; Okebukola, 2009). In the light of the glaring omission of the library as an essential component of this project, it only demonstrates that the role of the library and information, necessary to drive the vision to success is still not being appreciated as observed by Fatuyi, (1997) and Ojoade and Ochai (2000).

This paper will address the current state of development of education and hence academic libraries in Nigeria, the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 project of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the role of libraries in national development, the library as the missing catalyst that should drive the 1\TV 2020 to success and some recommendations on the way forward.

## Current State of Development of Education and Academic Libraries in Nigeria

The current state of education in Nigeria even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century leaves much to be desired. There is a general neglect and decay of educational facilities at all levels of education in Nigeria occasioned by the long standing culture of poor funding of education by successive governments in Nigeria. This situation prompted the comment in the editorial of the Guardian (2007, May, 25) that there must be something anti-intellectual about the policies and allocation of resources in our country especially under past military governments, sadly, the

civilian administration have not fared any better. Still commenting on the same issue especially in the face of the proposal of the Federal Government to establish six more Federal Universities in Nigeria, the Punch (2010, November, 18) observed that:

From the 1990s to date funding of tertiary education has been problematic as successive governments showed marked preference for other priorities and corruption became endemic. Budgetary allocation have declined to the extent that universities and other tertiary institutions are barely able to pay the salaries and allowances of personnel, libraries, laboratories and engineering workshops have long been in decay with the result that most products of the nations tertiary institutions lack the intellectual preparation and critical skills required to drive the development process in any sphere of national life.

There are 104 universities in Nigeria. They are made up of 27 Federal, 36 states and 41 private universities. The Federal Government of Nigeria recently announced that 6 new universities are to be established in addition to the existing 104 (the Nation, educational, 2010). This gives a new figure of 110 universities in Nigeria. These 6 newly proposed tmiversities have continued to generate displeasure from members of the public. According to the Nation (2010, November, 23) in its editorial:

It is indeed laughable that a government that cannot provide adequately for 27 universities wants to establish 6 more. This is a wrongheaded policy, except the Federal government has a new template for adequate funding of the old and proposed universities. But we are not convinced it does.

The Nigerian Universities are far too ill-equipped to train and develop new graduates suitable for the 21 st century, their products are mediocre. Analyses of the situation point to the extreme level of infrastructural as well as pedagogical deficiency in Nigerian Universities, this being the result of underfunding of public universities (Nwakanma, 2010). Still on this issue of mediocrity, Sanni (2010), while commenting on the Nigerian content Act passed in 2010 to regulate the activities of the Nigerian content Division of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), lamented that so far the effect of the law is not yet felt in Nigeria. This is because the International Oil Companies (IOCs) are reluctant to comply with it. They complain that Nigerian graduate engineers required in the industry do not have the basic engineering knowledge and skills largely due to inadequate training in the Universities. It is perhaps in the light of such deficiencies that Okecha (2008) and Peretemode (2010) decried the very poor level of funding of Nigerian education and universities and referred to the world universities ranking in which Nigeria Universities did not feature at all. African Universities were also ranked at the continental level in 2007 and this revealed that the first Top 8 African universities are located in South Africa. Among Africa's Top 100 universities, twenty are based in South Africa, 16 from Egypt and 10 from Morocco. Only four of Nigerian Universities, featured among the 100 universities in the 44<sup>th</sup> - Obafemi Awolowo University, 65<sup>th</sup>, University of Ibadan, 79<sup>th</sup> University of Benin and University of Lagos in the 96<sup>th</sup> position trailing far and miserably behind universities in some African countries such as Egypt, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Namibia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Morocco. (Okecha, 2008).

While decrying the poor state of education in Nigeria and the resultant effect on Nigeria, Ibrahim (2009) lamented that Nigeria was losing quite a huge sum of foreign exchange because of applicants seeking foreign university education. Furthermore, he gave a comparism of universities in Nigeria and Britain, noting that in an average British un.iversity, all facilities are available for research with libraries having the latest books on different subjects unlike in Nigeria. Still on the issue of poor funding and the deplorable state of education in Nigeria and its attendant effect on the Nigerian economy. The Nation (2010, November, 23) in its editorial observed as follows:

A recent report claimed that Nigerians are among the largest foreign students in the United States and Britain. Nigerians are also moving in large numbers to study in Ghana, other European and Asian universities ... but this is at a cost. For instance, a recent report suggests that Nigerian students spend N 13 7 billion to acquire education in Britain and the United States alone in the last two years.

To say that the state of education at all levels in Nigeria is miserably poor is an understatement. Infrastructure is at abysmally low level, students are crowded in hostels and lecture rooms like animals, necessary equipment machinery and current journals are absent (The Nation, 2010, November, 23). Furthermore, while expressing anger over plans by the Federal government to scrap colleges of education and polytechnics in Nigeria, the union of colleges argued strongly that government's poor attitude towards the teaching profession has affected the quality of teaching and teaching practice in the country. It is clear from the policy "summersaults and adhoc measures" that government is largely responsible for the failing in the education subsector, (The Guardian, 2010, November, 30). While delivering his inaugural lecture titled, "What is Higher in Higher Education" (Peretomode, 2010), was emphatic in his submission that the library should be given priority in funding in the university. This is because, for the educational institution to be strong academically, the library which is the heart of the college or university must be strong. He noted that the top universities in the world have strong libraries for instance, Harvard university library consist of 80 individual libraries and has over 15 million volumes of books thereby priding itself as the largest academic library in the world. This is the case with all the topmost universities in the world. For instance, the University of California, Berkeley's library has 10 million volumes of books and 70,000 serial titles, Stanford university library has 8 million volumes of books and 19 libraries. However, in Africa, the University of Cape Town (South Africa) has one main library and 9 branch libraries containing 1.5 million volumes and over 27,000 journals titles. All these when compared with the situation in Nigeria where the premier university of Ibadan which was ranked 65<sup>th</sup> among universities in Africa has one million volumes of books, 60,000 journals and subscription to 20 databases, gives a rather gloomy and discouraging picture of the state of the other tertiary institutions in Nigeria as regards their libraries.

## The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 project of the Federal Government of Nigeria

The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 (NV 2020), project of the Federal Government of Nigeria is the projection that by the year 2020, Nigeria should be one of the world's top 20 economies. The NV 2020 idea emerged during the presidency of late Umaru Yar Adua. According to the National Planning Commission (2009):

The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 is the country's blueprint and perspective action plan which captures the collective aspirations of Nigerians to make their country one of the twenty leading economies in the world. One which is able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as significant player in the global economic and political arena by the year 2020.

According to the National Planning Commission (2011), in order to achieve the foregoing aspiration, the country is expected to enhance her economic development performance in line with the following objectives:

- Polity - to have a peaceful, harmonious and stable democratic polity;
- Macro-Economics - to have a sound, stable and globally competitive economies, with a GDP of not less than \$900 billion USD and a per capital income of not less than \$4,000 USD per annum;
- Infrastructural Development - to have an adequate level to support the full mobilization of all economic sectors;
- Education - to boast of a modern and vibrant education system which

provides for every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his/her maximum potential and provide the country with adequate and competent manpower.

- Health - to have a health sector that supports and sustains a life expectancy of not less than 70 years and reduce to the barest minimum the burden of high maternal and infant mortality as well as debilitating diseases such as malaria, HIV / AIDs, etc.
- Agriculture - to have a modern technologically enabled agricultural sector that fully harnesses the vast potential of agricultural resources of the country, ensures national food security and contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings,
- Manufacturing - to be a vibrant and globally competitive manufacturing sector that contributes significantly to the GDP with a manufacturing value added of not less than 40%.
- Information and Commission Technology (ICT) - have a sophisticated and dynamic ICT to foster increased competitiveness and productivity in the economy with a positive impact on macro-economic growth.

The Nigerian Vision 20:2020 is a bottom-up strategic plan in which each major stake holder group will prepare its Vision 2020 thoughts and ideas based on the guidelines approved by the National Council. The Nigerian government is required to have investments of between \$8bn and \$10bn annually to be among the top 20 economies of the world by year 2020. Such investments should be collaboration between government and the private sector. Still on funds required by the project, Okebukola (2009), observed that Nigeria needs to invest a total of \$510 billion in upgrading its dilapidating infrastructure and building new ones over the next 10 years in order to achieve Vision 20:2020.

## The Role of the Library in Education and National Development

Regardless of the notable negative impact of underfunding of educational institutions in Nigeria, the library remains the core and most vital equipment of any recognized educational institution. This is because, as a resource, it occupies a central and primary place serving the functions of teaching, learning and research in the creation of new knowledge, promotion of current information in professional practice and transmission to posterity of the learning and culture of the present and past age, (Lawal, 2004). In this 21st Century, information has received a widespread acceptance as the essential feature of production, consumption and exchange. The world has entered an era where the source of wealth and power is increasingly from information and human mental creativity as compared with physical resources. Thus global economy has become not only knowledge intensive but also transactional and extremely competitive (Opeke, 2004).

Because of the central place of information in national development as exemplified by the topmost economies of the world, Nigeria needs to mainstream libraries and information in her development project. This necessitates that information be perceived, portrayed and utilized as a requirement for the peoples survival and be used to harness their sentiments, energies and talents for appropriate development actions. In this regard, librarians in academic libraries and other libraries for that matter must be the major actors in providing, designing, coordinating, maintaining and steering the course of an information powered development. Such information must be accurate, timely, relevant, complete and concise. Furthermore, in this 21st century which is the age of the internet, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will be employed at its highest level to harness the necessary information globally for accelerated national development.

In the light of the foregoing, it is pertinent to reiterate the obvious fact that for the purpose of the pursuance of the goals of the NV 2020, the library must be brought to the front burner so that its services can be harnessed to leapfrog Nigeria to the

desired goal. The library is regarded as the heart of any educational institution, particularly the tertiary institutions which are relied upon to produce the middle and higher level manpower for national development. This is because the quality of the products of these institutions are measured to a very large extent by the information resources provided by their libraries for teaching and research required to equip the students with the necessary skills and knowledge for national development.

## The Library - The Missing Catalyst For Achievement of the Goals of the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 Project

A look at the broad areas of focus of the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (NV 2020) and thematic main sectors outlined to guide the Nigerian public in their submission of memoranda on the NV 2020 project reveals that emphasis is not placed on the various aspects which should drive the education main sector to success. This is contrary to the case with most of the other main sectors such as Finance, which has sub-sectors such as Banking, Insurance, Pension, Capital Market, etc, or Agriculture, which has Food Security, Irrigation, etc, as sub-sectors. (National Planning Commission, 2009). Without the library component properly mainstreamed into the NV 2020 project, one wonders how the project intends to achieve its educational objective of having a "modern and vibrant educational system that will provide the country with adequate and competent manpower" like the case in the topmost economies of the world which Nigeria is aspiring to catch up with by the year 2020. Since it is the academic libraries in higher institutions that do provide the necessary information for teaching and research to equip the students with knowledge and skills required to make them competent manpower for the achievement of the NV 2020, then the library should be a separately recognized main sector or at least a prominent sub-sector of education in the NV 2020 project. This is the only way by which government can demonstrate a positive change of attitude to the importance of libraries to this project and hence be able to focus attention and funds on libraries in order to harness their contributions towards the success of the NV 2020 project.

It is rather unfortunate that in analyzing the financial requirements of \$100 billion for the NV2020 project for the next six years, the federal government identified just four infrastructural areas that would require investment. They are: Power (\$20 billion), Rail Track (\$17 billion), Roads, (\$14 billion), and Oil and Gas (\$60 billion). (Okebukola, 2009). It is indeed worrisome that education is not seen by government as one of the very important sectors that requires such huge financial commitment in pursuance of the NV 2020. This unfortunate omission in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and in the face of the seeming desire of government to attain NV 2020 goals brings into focus the outcry on the deplorable state of education in Nigeria by Ayodele and Sofola (2010) that:

There is the need to take a critical look at the entire education policy and accommodate noticeable trends used in shoring up the quality of education elsewhere (other countries). This calls for change in policies. The quality of education being dished out (in Nigeria) should be a concern to all. Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century springs from ideas and ideas come from informed minds. That means that Nigeria needs to develop a radical approach towards revamping education. The public policy challenge in the present circumstances is to take a holistic view at the entire sector with a view to seeing what stakeholders have either not done correctly or done with half measure.

While articulating issues of importance in his lecture titled, "Education Reform Imperatives for Achieving Vision 20:2020", Okebukola, (2009), observed that through education, skills and knowledge for growing the economy and spawning new industries are developed. Education engenders research for new inventions,



processes and products which are boosters of the economy. Microsoft, Toyota and Boeing are examples of the institutions that have exploited the power of education to leverage economy through research. The academic libraries are at the centre of the teaching and research which engenders these transformations in the economy. Furthermore, the examples of the topmost economies of the world such as United States of America, Britain, Germany, France, Japan, etc, and the direct correlation between the buoyancy of their economies and the types of tertiary institutions and the academic libraries which they boast of should be a wake up call for the Nigerian government if she is really serious about making Nigeria one of the 20 most developed economies of the world by the year 2020.

The views of Ayodele and Sofola (2010) already noted elsewhere in this paper, should be taken very seriously. Nigeria needs to copy from other advanced countries, what they are doing right about their educational system and their libraries as a way of shoring up our educational system to be able to achieve the NV 2020.

It is now very obvious that absence of emphasis on libraries and academic libraries in particular as the catalyst that should drive Nigeria to attain NV 2020 should be redressed. This is an essential step that must be taken at this stage in the history of Nigeria because it is evident that education and libraries are some of the areas most neglected by the Nigerian government in funding and provision of infrastructure. Since libraries of tertiary institutions of the countries with the topmost economies of the world are the best due to adequate provision of funds and infrastructure for teaching and research, it is imperative that Nigeria must follow the same path.

As it stands, the NV 2020 project which is the blueprint for the economic transformation of Nigeria by the year 2020 is ironically a stagnating force for the improvement in the state of academic libraries in Nigeria. This is because, it did not give even the slightest mention to libraries either as a main sector or thematic sub-sector. One implication of this is that the education sector and academic libraries will continue to receive the same neglect as before. One would have expected such a document to give serious attention to libraries so that libraries at all levels including academic libraries can be transformed to cater for the research and teaching needs in education for the NV 2020 project, thereby using libraries as catalysts to accelerate achievement of this project and hence national development as is expected in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Nigerian government should recognize the important role of libraries in this all important project of NV 2020. The advanced countries of the world have since recognized that educational institutions and their libraries are the catalysts which drive their economies. The Nigerian government should do the same by integrating development of libraries into the NV 2020 project and demonstrate commitment by providing adequate funds to revamp libraries, especially academic libraries, as other sectors of the Nigerian economy are being revamped preparatory to attaining the NV 2020 goals. When this is done, the NV 2020 project would be a driving force for the development of academic libraries in Nigeria especially in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper addressed the current state of development of education and hence academic libraries in Nigeria, and noted that education at the tertiary level is responsible for the production of the necessary middle and higher level manpower for national development. While lamenting the age-long neglect in funding and infrastructural provision by government for tertiary institutions and academic libraries, it was emphasized that academic libraries are the pivots of any successful teaching and research that goes to produce the necessary competent manpower for national development. Consequently, for Nigeria Vision 20:2020

project to succeed, the academic libraries must be properly mainstreamed into the project.

Aspects of the NV 2020 project were examined and the role of libraries in national development were examined thus bringing into focus the obvious fact that the library component which is missing from the NV 2020 project is actually the catalyst that should propel the project to success. It is concluded that the NV 2020 project should recognize the role of the academic libraries in this project and hence give them special attention and huge funding in order to give these libraries the accelerated development that would enable them contribute their essential quota to help leapfrog Nigeria to achieve the goals of the NV 2020 project. The fact that the project has not given the appropriate recognition and attention to libraries even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century makes it a major stagnating force for the development of academic libraries in Nigeria.

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1) That the Nigerian government must urgently mainstream libraries in the education sector of the NV 2020 project in order to demonstrate seriousness in developing the necessary quality manpower to achieve its goals. This is the only way by which the NV 2020 project can be a driving force for the development of academic libraries;
- 2) That Government at all levels in Nigeria should change its poor attitude towards the funding of education and libraries in Nigeria. There should be massive injection of funds into the education sector and libraries;
- 3) That the display of ignorance by the government and people of Nigeria about the importance of libraries to national development should be changed radically. In this regard, librarians in Nigeria should mount aggressive enlightenment campaigns to enlighten the general public at all levels on the importance of libraries to the development of Nigeria.
- 4) There is the need for a special National Policy on information to be put in place by the government of Nigeria, so as to awaken the consciousness of all Nigerians to the importance of libraries and information to national development. This could be done through massive publicity in both the print and electronic media.
- 5) For the purpose of achieving the NV 2020 project, the government of Nigeria at all levels must rise to the occasion and do all it takes to bring education and the academic libraries

in Nigeria up to the standards of the topmost economies of the world by providing the necessary funding and infrastructure. All that the government has been doing wrongly or failing to do in this regard should be corrected after a necessary study of the inputs being made in this regard by advanced countries.

6) The Education Tax Fund (ETF), has been giving financial support to tertiary institutions and other relevant institutions and their libraries to enable them develop better. These funds should be strictly utilized for the purpose. A situation where such funds are being diverted to other uses in some of the institutions will not augur well for the accelerated development of academic libraries. The utilization of funds should be closely monitored by ETF so that they can support the massive funding required for the NV 2020 project. One of such monitoring processes could be to include the librarians as signatories to the library account for ETF funds sent to the institutions. This will go a long way to make it more effective.

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