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The State of The National Library of Nigeria: Why The Nigeria Government Must Act Fast.

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The State of The National Library of Nigeria: Why The Nigeria Government Must Act Fast.

Abstract

Nigeria, like many other developing countries, is passing through a critical period of educational, economic, political and social development. This established a truism that such development cannot be achieved in isolation. It is therefore felt by many that if Nigeria is to achieve its full potential in these core areas of human growth, development of her national library is imperative. This article help to state the problems of the National Library of Nigeria and the possible Solutions and Recommendations.

Introduction

Library is a tool for intellectual freedom and economic development; a gateway to political, economic, social happiness and survival. Freedom in its various dimensions means the absence of ignorance of situations. The acquisition of knowledge needed to dispel ignorance is derived from studying. Edward Newton realized this when he opined that one may become wise from contemplation, but knowledge comes only from study.

According to the estimates released on the Tuesday, August 13, 2019 by the United Nations, current population of Nigeria stood at 201,489,337 and it is equivalent to 2.6% of the total world population. This data revealed Nigeria as the most populous nation in Africa; she prides herself as the giant of Africa. However, the question remains that is Nigeria really the Giant of Africa? If there are affirmative responses, what are the likely indicators that may ensure such conclusion?

Nigeria, like many others developing countries, is passing through critical period of educational, economic, political and social development. This established a truism that such development cannot be achieved in isolation. It is therefore felt by many that if Nigeria is to achieve its full potential in these core areas of human growth, development of her national library is imperative.

The National Library of Nigeria

The National Library of Nigeria was established in the mid 1960 with the enactment of the National Library Act of 1964. In 1970, a new legal precedent was set with the creation of the National Library decree, the decree was partly enacted on the advice of the National Library Board which wanted to expand the library to other state capitals in order to create a network of repositories of knowledge. The collections of National Library of Nigeria are limitless ranging from textbooks, journals, reference collections and government documents, among others. A lot of my colleagues have been advocating for better libraries in Nigeria and the completion of the Nigeria National Library, Abuja. This noble cause cannot be over emphasized because of the importance of a functional National library of Nigeria in almost all the facets of human existence and development. This is why the federal government must, as a matter of urgency, needs to declare a state of emergency on the National Library of Nigeria.

At the national level, the federal government funds the National Library of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Education. The National Library of Nigeria is categorised as a public library because it serves all categories of users regardless of their gender, religion, or cultural affinity. The governance structure of the National library is the responsibility of the federal

Ministry of Education, and the allocation of funds is derived directly from the federal government's budget. The selection and acquisition of material, service delivery, and all other administrative responsibilities are discharged by senior librarians and the executives of the National Library of Nigeria.

In February this year, the Federal government proposed 50 billion for the completion of the Apex library, exactly 13 years the project was first conceived. Surprisingly, nothing has been done; it looks as everything has been swept under the carpet. Blessing Akporhonor, a librarian at the Delta State University noted that, every library is supported by three legs – physical building, collections, and the staff. However, the tendon supporting these legs, and what ultimately binds them together, is money. Specifically, funding is central to any enterprise, and for library to meet her objectives, provision of funding is a necessity. This is because when funds are not provided, quality service delivery will be affected adversely.

The industrialization age is now obvious. To this end, industrial developments can hardly be achieved without relevant information. Therefore, there is need for a functional and well equipped national library in order to ensure an economically viable Nigeria that bases her policies on informed decision making. This is because libraries as reservoir of reliable information that are consulted for reference and other services centres for nation building.

Regrettably, all the potentials of national library in Nigeria are being hindered presently due to poor reading culture, inadequate funding and high level of illiteracy. Despite these challenges, national library can provide information on improving productivity, hygiene, business activities and promote democracy and social-economic issues. On this note, it is good for the governments in Nigeria to fully become aware that great nations of the world prosper using the possibilities in reliable information. It is good to also state that public library is central to information management by qualified library professionals.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In essence, libraries in Nigeria are confronted with similar challenges. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria made it known that there are 316 public libraries in both the rural and urban Nigeria. Although the headquarters of National Library of Nigeria is located in Abuja; she has 25 branches nationwide. In addition, all the 36 states in Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory have Library Boards. Presently, there are 253 branches of the state's library Boards spread across the rural communities in the country (Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria, 2015). It is therefore perceived that if these libraries are given due attention through proper funding, they have the capacity to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

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