



## **The Role Of Library In Transforming Teacher Education For Self-Reliance And Nation Building**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is a growing concern in the minds of people on the relevance of the library in educational transformation, self-reliance and nation building. This paper critically addresses some of the roles of the library in transforming education for self-reliance and nation building in Nigeria. It further reiterates the importance of the library in the Nigerian educational system, and concludes that no nation may be self-reliant or developed without a viable educational system and well stocked libraries to promote nation building.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education; Library Self-Reliance and nation Building..

### **INTRODUCTION**

The standard of education of the citizenry of any nation determines the level of development of the nation. There has been series of reports in the mass media about examination malpractices and incidence of mass examination failures amongst students in secondary schools in Nigeria. The curricula of education for students in both primary and secondary schools have been changed several times within the last fifteen years. School libraries are meant to be established in these schools to help students improve their reading and study skills to become independent learners, yet many schools do not have libraries and the government, ministry of education and proprietors, and all stakeholders have not realized that it is the absence of libraries and lack of implementation of policy that has affected the education system.

Teacher education refers to a professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the needs of a given society at any point in time.

Libraries are the basic means of acquiring knowledge and education, and the main key of every kind of national development. Knowledge is the jewel of humanity, the source of progress, and the key to good governance and leadership.

The role of educational institutions in human capital development, research and technological innovation cannot be underestimated. Development and sustenance of education is non-negotiable. A report from the National Higher Education Forum (NHEF) held at Abuja (2014) confirmed that:

Before the turn of table, the Nigerian education sector was the envy of other nations, owing to its well-equipped institutions, well-trained and well-motivated teachers whose expertise in imparting the right

knowledge ensured that Nigerian universities churned graduates who could compete with their contemporaries anywhere around the world without difficulties.

The report showed that there is a gap in the educational system of Nigeria. Education plays a critical role in the development of human capital. Its importance to economic growth and development is well recognized in development planning. 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 institutions in support of literacy, national development and sustainable education is well recognized.

The library is a combination of both collection of information sources, resources, services and the structure in which it is housed. Libraries have become a focal point in learning, teaching and research activities of a learning community. The library plays a major role in transforming education through acquisition, provision and dissemination of information materials. The library is an integral part of the educational system, and one of the most vital components for national development. In a foreword message on the 2014 Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) Directory (2014), the then Minister of Education Dr. Shekarau stated that the library and information science occupies a vantage position in the education sector and plays a strategic role in national growth and development. Librarians are, therefore, one of the drivers of transformation in any nation.

In Nigeria, no university can be established without a functional and well stocked library. According to NUC (2005), no academic program can be accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the only accrediting body with the mandate of supervising and accrediting higher institutions in Nigeria, unless there are adequate library materials in print and non-print available in the library.

### **The Role of the Library in Educational Transformation, Self Reliance and Nation Building**

The educational development of any nation will determine the knowledge base of the nation which will in effect determine the growth of the industrial, political, economic, and financial and every other aspect of the nation. Ogunsola (2008) opined that the development of education may be said to be synonymous with the development of library and library services within any given community. Libraries are very relevant to the development of our educational system. The impact of library on educational transformation, self-reliance and nation building is an important topic of discussion in the current academic world. In the modern world, libraries have become invaluable assets to educational development of individuals. From elementary schools to universities, libraries have had an immense impact on educational transformation, self-reliance and nation building.

SDG (Increasing access to information and knowledge, underpinned by universal literacy, is an essential pillar of sustainable development goals. The library is important towards achieving the SDG goals. Libraries in different countries are supporting in the development of their constituents, for example:

- In Botswana, public libraries have taken large strides toward supporting government objectives under its National Vision 2016 by introducing ICT access and improving the computer skills of library users among others.
- Zimbabwe Library Association is currently seeking to align libraries to participate in national development through the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset).
- The National Library of Uganda (NLU) developed a program, supported by the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL), to train young people in basic computer literacy.
- In Romania, librarians trained by Biblionet helped 100,000 farmers to access US\$187 million in subsidies via new internet and computer services in 2011-2012. The librarians who participated in the training brought the services to their libraries.
- In Indonesia, the National Library of Indonesia played an important role in increasing the level of education and literacy for a population that is spread across islands where education is harder to access. The initiative lead to massive education of citizens living around waters, which is not easily accessible by road.

- In Canada, an initiative of Library's Man in the Moon Literacy program was instituted in 2001 in various locations around Vancouver to provide literacy education for men, women and children.
- In Moldova, libraries are contributing to Open Government Partnership (OGP) action plans. A platform between government, civil society and business to drive commitments to open government and accountability.
- In China, the launching of mobile library has enhanced the reading culture of the populace, cutting the bridge between distance and the library as users can access information resources while at the comfort of their homes.
- In Nigeria, library's participation in the area of education, agricultural activities, tourism, health and commercial activities are paramount contributory factors to the level of national development.

### **Quality educational system: Library supporting and promoting information literacy**

Aina (2014) noted that core library and information services, such as literature search, information literacy programs among others are rarely provided to clients by Nigerian libraries. Similarly, Omelazor, Oyovwe, Timuoye and Emeka (2017) found that public libraries in Delta state, Nigeria did not organize programs on reading and information literacy for its patrons. It should be noted that information literacy is crucial in making people know their entitlements to welfare benefits and sources of support in to overcome social exclusion. Ehewolate (2010) stated that effective library and information services in rural areas can enhance development and improve quality education in rural communities. The education for all (EFA) movement organized by UNESCO in 2015 provided the basis for educational system since it emphasizes basic education for all including children, youth and adult. The objectives of the movement include:

Supporting the achievement of education for all (EFA)

- Providing global and regional leadership in education
- Building effective education systems worldwide from early childhood to the adult years, and
- Responding to contemporary global challenges .through education.

Through the EFA, UNESCO calls on every educational institution including the library to support information literacy by providing access to relevant information to the people.

The foundation for an effective and formalized information literacy program was based on the NUC (2007) benchmark for minimum standards for undergraduate program. The benchmark made provision for a two credit unit course for "Use of Library, Study Skill and Information Communication Technology (ITC) under the General Studies (GST) program. The course is taught by Librarians and cover areas such as the use of library, information resources and bibliographic instructions. Through the course librarians in Nigeria have expanded their role as advocates and teachers of information literacy. In America and Denmark, libraries have formulated information literacy standards for students learning focusing on efficient and effective access to information, crucial and competent evaluation of information, accurate and creative use of information, independent learning and supporting new teaching methods to assist students in their learning process.

Dubicki (2013) stated that the primary goal of librarians is to work in coordination with the faculty in order to produce information literate students as graduates who can effectively utilize information literacy skills in the workplace.

### **The Importance of Library in Transforming Education for Self-Reliance and Nation Building in Nigeria**

Adewuyi and Oloajo (2013), noted that Nigerian appreciation of librarianship as a profession is extremely poor when compared with other professions like medicine, law and engineering, etc. Librarianship in the 70s and 80s was seen as an idle profession meant for "low-grade candidates." Some have argued that librarians are no longer needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with advancement in ICT and use of the Internet<sup>23</sup>. Evidence-based studies revealed that the library is a hub of developmental activities since it engages its users in activities that turn them into critical thinkers, problem solvers, independent information seekers and lifelong learners. The argument is further awash by the position of IFLA/UNESO (2018), which

upholds the library as a medium for accessing information, ideas and works of imagination. In addition, IFLA noted that communities with quality access to timely and relevant information are better positioned for quality education, health care, improved agriculture, poverty eradication and equality. 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.

In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has the mandate of denying accreditation of academic program(s) in any university that is found deficient in library resources (book and non-book). Universities in Nigeria are also rated by the standard of their libraries. This is because a university library is the single largest academic resource of last recourse. The role of the library towards sustaining quality academic excellence in Nigeria makes it a port of call for every accrediting body to a university. The library is a platform where people meet to research and share ideas on critical issues affecting the society, thereby becoming a knowledge space that is both larger and more general than those shared by any single discipline or affinity group

The impact of the library would be felt greatly in the rural communities of 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. The United Nation’s report according to Gill empowers the public libraries to help in bringing everyone into a global conversation and to bridge what is often called ‘the digital divide’. This can be achieved by providing information technology for public access and teaching basic computer skills<sup>31</sup>.

According to Bertsch and Warner-Søderholm (2013), the educational institutions and libraries can serve as a medium to extend cultural discourse, literacy and research. Effective library and information services in the rural communities of Nigeria can enhance development and improve quality of education of the rural people. This is because the library handles virtually all the activities that enhance the development of the people, including:

1. Preservation of cultural heritage (artifacts, world book of records, etc.)
2. Preservation of knowledge and histories of the past.
3. Tourist centre.
4. Promotion, collaboration and scholarship thereby sustaining readership, research, and publishing of research output.
5. Promotion, creation and publishing of digital contents through electronic databases, digital commons, repositories, which enhances sustainability of education in any nation.
6. Enhancing access to information and sharing of ideas, contents through online systems like digital library, online public access catalogue, portals, wikis, etc.

In the *Lyon declaration (2014) on access to information and development*, it was noted that library services contribute towards improving the outcome across the SDGs as follows:

1. Promoting universal literacy, including media and information literacy.
2. Closing gaps in access to information and helping government, civil society, and business to better understand local information needs.
3. Providing a network of delivery sites for government programs and services.
4. Advancing digital inclusion through access to Information & Communications Technologies (ICT), and dedicated staff to help people develop new digital skills.
5. Serving as the heart of the research and academic community.
6. Preserving and providing access to the world’s culture and heritage.
7. More specifically, libraries have supported the implementation of the SDGs by providing access to information, support for literacy and ICT skills, and access to community space.

Furthermore, the library can transform the educational level of its users to make them be self-reliant and support national development through the following:

#### ***Collection of relevant information materials***

The library has a duty to search for relevant and up-to-date information materials published within and outside a country, and to collect and store the materials for the benefit of its users. Such information may

be in any format, for example, CD-ROMs, book, visual, audio, audio-visual, etc. Collection of such information materials for the benefit of the library users can be done through outright acquisition such as subscription and purchase. Other sources of acquisition are interlibrary loan, donation, gift and exchange. The library also subscribes to e-books, e-journals and e-databases to increase access to external information resources and enhance literacy level of its users. To enhance the standard of education, most libraries in Nigeria subscribes to databases such as EBSCO, Ebrary, Lexis Nexis, Science Direct, DOAJ, HINARI and AJOL among others to augment the print materials. This would help users to access current research that will impact self-learning experiences and thereby improve their skills and knowledge.

#### ***Supporting the library Users***

In order to transform education for self-reliance and national development and increase the literacy level of library users, libraries in Nigeria should create awareness of available information resources in the library (both on the shelves within the library and on databases), and serve as an advocate of information literacy. It should support its users to access information easily. Supporting users and providing opportunities for disabled people to have independent access to information has remained pivotal for the library. The library should provide relevant information materials and disseminate them to its users. Quality access to information sources and services by the library users would engender acquisition of relevant skill and knowledge for national development. The guidelines for development by IFLA/UNESCO acknowledge that the library managers must ensure that the community is aware of the importance of the library services<sup>24</sup>.

#### ***Promotion of literacy program***

Educating the people in the rural areas should be a major objective of the rural libraries in Nigeria. Harande noted that the library in the rural areas can be utilized to distribute literacy materials to the rural communities that will help the people to be more functional in their occupations. In addition, there is need for cooperation between the library, information professionals and educators as a requirement for establishing integrated information literacy programs. Furthermore, the library should use information and communication technology (ICT) in providing information in Nigeria thereby creating awareness for the people to become ICT literate. Training the library users in the use of ICT tools would improve their skill in using ICT facilities. Such training will enhance effective utilization of the Internet and electronic information resources.

#### ***Access to information***

According to Agbo and Onyekweodiri, (2014) information is a vital tool in all forms of human endeavor. The library is a focal point for accessing relevant information that can enhance the development of a nation. Provision of equitable access to information materials is a major role of the library. In this era where the use of ICT tools is crucial in learning, libraries in Nigeria should play a role in ICT literacy and function as a medium where ICT skills can be acquired. IFLA confirmed that technology is gradually transforming the lives of library users who have been largely excluded from using traditional library materials, for example the visually impaired.

#### **Implication of Libraries for Productivity and Nation Building**

Libraries are searching grounds for prospective professionals in various fields. Adequate financial support to the libraries will have the following implications:

- Provision of library materials: There will be enough library materials, like books, non-book materials, audio-visual equipment, etc, that would make the would-be professionals undergoing training to be vast and knowledgeable in their various fields.
- Available infrastructural facilities will be maintained and new ones provided so that students and staff will teach and learn in a conducive environment.
- Provision of information technology and information services to facilitate teaching and learning.
- Production of intellectually sound professionals who are experts in their fields.

- When academically sound graduates join the labour force, their input will be high; and this will bring about development that makes for nation building.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

In the light of the aforementioned implications, the following suggestions are made:

- Government should adequately fund the libraries onward b ( both federal and state).
- Individual organizations or missions who have established schools or libraries are called upon to fund their libraries properly.
- Philanthropic individuals or organizations can help fund libraries by giving gifts and donations.
- Money allotted to libraries should be judiciously used to purchase library resources.
- Adequate librarians should give priority to the most pressing library needs in their purchase of library resources.

### **CONCLUSION**

Education has remained the bedrock for development and a tool for the eradication of illiteracy. To this end, libraries in Nigeria should ensure to sustain the educational system, literacy level of the people for self-reliance and enhance national development. The library as an avenue by which information is acquired and disseminated to the people should strengthen research and development. Identifying the library's role in transforming education system and infusing literacy among the people for self-reliance will ensure vibrancy of a nation's human capital development. A nation cannot be well developed without a stable educational system and the library at the centre to support learning, teaching and research. The library's active role in the Nigerian educational system will bring about a turnaround in transforming the citizens, thereby making them self-reliance in promoting nation building support, learning, teaching, research and innovative activities of the people.

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