

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AS A VEHICLE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A nation is said to be developed if its citizens reaches a sustainable standard of living. This paper examines the academic library as a vehicle for national development in Nigeria. For the attainment of a sustainable national development the academic library provides timely and relevant information resources that a nation requires to enable its citizens enjoy a healthy and conducive life. For development programs to be planned, implemented and rated as successful, it must be inclusive and the academic library cannot be left out in the scheme. The academic library is the reservoir of information that improves knowledge and skills for positive productivity and as a tool for national development therefore this paper specifically examines the academic libraries as a vehicle for national development in Nigeria with special references to education, economics, political, health service delivery and agricultural development. The challenges faced by academic libraries in Nigeria were also discussed and recommendations were offered on how academic libraries can be improved to enhance national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Academic Libraries, National Development, Vehicle.*

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are the libraries attached to tertiary institutions of learning. Academic library for a developed nation serves as a tool for intellectual development which in turn leads to economic, social, political, educational and agricultural development and improves human survivals. The acquisition of knowledge dispels ignorance and the library is hub where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their level of ignorance. According to Yacorn (2011) academic libraries are institutions that are established to take care of the information needs of students, lecturers, researchers and other community of scholars.

Akintunde (2004) was of the opinion that libraries in tertiary institutions have either earned the institutions accreditation or failed them because libraries are regarded as tools for academic excellence. Information is a vital tool in national development, the availability of information tools and the ability to put these tools to good use is deemed as source of power.

The greatest resource for development is the human resource; no nation can develop in isolation of her human resources. According to Opeke (2004), information has received a widespread acceptance as the essential feature of production, consumption and exchange in this modern era. To buttress the above academic institutions play prominent role in manpower development of any nation providing the needed middle level manpower for acceleration of social, economic and political advancement of the nation. Therefore Edoke (2000), gave the general functions of an academic library as follows:

Academic Libraries as a Vehicle for National Development in Nigeria

- To provide research information resources in consonance with the needs of faculty and research students.
- To provide information resources for recreation and for personal self-development of users.
- To provide study accommodation in a useful variety of locations.
- To provide protection and security for these materials.
- To cooperate with other libraries of appropriate levels for improved information services.
- To provide specialised information service to appropriate segments of the wider community.

Development implies enhanced quality of life, equity and justice, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) assert that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximise their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily needs while Mundi (2008) opined that development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. Furthermore is the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy. It is social-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society.

National Development

To Elugbe (1994), national development refers among other things, to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government.

In summary development entails the provisions of all the necessary materials and equipments that will guarantee that man in every society make a living and essence out of life.

Gboyega (2003) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumptions does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihood and expansion of life chances.

Academic Libraries as a Vehicle for National Development in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government has embarked on national development through the use of various types of plans namely short term, medium, and long term plans, with these plans put in place the problems of development has persisted. Nigeria is still struggling to attain the desired level of development and this is why it has been tagged developing nation by the west. The predominant features in these countries called developing nations according to Thirwall (2003), include, low level of capital accumulation, the dominance of agriculture and petty services, rapid population growth, exports dominated by primary commodities, unemployment, national income distribution poverty weighted growth rate, lack of basic welfare needs, stages of development and structural change, industrialisation and growth.

Academic libraries as a centre for the provision of information resources that empowers as developing nation is a tool for intellectual's freedom and economic development, a gateway to political, economic and social happiness and survival.

Academic Library in Educational Development of Nigeria.

Education and library are two inseparable indivisible concepts; none of them is an end in itself rather: both of them together are a means to an end. One dies as soon as the other perishes. Library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a vehicle for national development.

According to Akintunde (2004) academic libraries have always served as a tool for educational advancement of all levels of education. The advantage is that people are enabled to participate in economic, political and cultural life which depends on their ability to access and use academic library as sources of information services. Academic library will play a pivotal role in the development of a society that is characterised by developed economics which Nigeria is eager to become. Omojuwa (1993) states that the library enables the individual to obtain spiritual, inspirational, and recreational activity through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge.

Academic Library In Economic Development In Nigeria

Academic library stock information resources, people are expected to obtain knowledge and skills and therefore specialise in specific fields of study.

If this knowledge are acquired they are expected to contribute meaningfully to national development. Manvoto and Mutasa (2004) here observed that adequate and relevant information in all spheres of existence is needed for a nation to develop as its availability or non-availability can dictate the wealth or poverty of a nation.

Sobolaje and Ogunmodede (2015) states that the amount and exact nature of the services provided by these libraries to contribute towards the nation's economic development differs, depending on the library itself and the services rendered. These can be as stated:

- i. City Business Directory e.g. (The major 5,000 companies in Nigeria) academic library began its services with economic development by housing with the compilation of the city's business directory.
- ii. Information Alert Services for Business: applying information relevant to businesses, for example highlights problems that have already been solved in other businesses and that would be of general interest to the nation.
- iii. Information about the nation, E.g. (Osun State Annual and Investment Digest): A guide containing relevant information on the city, such as restaurants, banks, hospitals, chemists and laundries etc. This type of information has many users: new residents, visitors and entrepreneurs themselves who use the information to analyse markets and new business opportunities.
- iv. Job and Career Information e.g. (Information Communication Technology Firms such as MTN and GLO)
Information which helps the unemployed or people looking for new job opportunities. Academic Library served as repository for annual business reports books on job interviews or on how to write curriculum vitae. Etc
- v. Book and Journal lists: the library could select books and journals to assist business people and researchers to be successful in their businesses and area of their research works.
- vi. Advice Service for businesses: the library could promote talks, meetings between business people and business specialists as well as having professional specialised libraries to attend to the users.
- vii. And other services that the library may identify as being necessary for its users such as information on health.

Academic Library as A Tool For Political Development

Knowledge and Information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness, increased wealth, prosperity and political development. The present democratisation process in Nigeria has suffered from problems ranging from manipulations of rules and to fully consolidate the democratic government the academic libraries has important role to play.

Academic Libraries as a Vehicle for National Development in Nigeria

In the light of the above Akomolafe (2002) opined that the library are to select, acquire, store, package and disseminate information to users for the development of individuals and for nation building.

The academic libraries can organise a forum for political discussion where political actors and institutions of state are cited in democratic values, norms and ethics. Arcibugi and Marchetti (2009) opined that the fundamental democratic principle requires that public decisions have to be taken after consultation with all individuals who would enjoy or suffer the public consequences of those decisions. The best political tool to offer the possibility of influencing public decision in any sphere of action is political participation; the libraries maintain freedom of expression and constructively provide a critical attitude to all public issues and world affairs. Political development entails qualitative and quantitative increase in the capacity, skills and creativity and general material well-being of individuals.

According to Sobolaje and Ogunmodede (2015) academic library for developed countries serves as a tool for intellectuals' development, economic, political development and social happiness and survival. Adegoke (1995) defined a library as collection of books and other forms of records and resources housed, organised, and interpreted to meet the broad varying needs of students, staff and others for information, recreation and inspiration.

Academic Libraries in Health service delivery

For a nation to develop it is imperative that the masses receives information. National development hinges predominantly on human resources to drive it. The eight goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are:

To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women: reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure Environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development (UN 2000).

The library plays an important role in the dissemination of health information and the promotion of healthy living. Sobolaje and Ogunmodede (2015) noted the central role of information in controlling behavioural diseases such as HIV/AIDS and drug addict among Nigerians often resulted the government to deploying all available information sources, without any discrimination of the source according to their use characteristics in the target communities. Many diseases that causes serious health problems are documented in academic libraries across Nigeria. The adverse effect of these diseases on Nigerians leads to low productivity among the labour force. On this note Adio, Akewukereke and Samuel (2007) noted that citizens need access to information on clinical effectiveness in order to improve the quality of care and to stay well-informed on developments in specialist areas.

Academic Libraries in Agricultural Development

Tertiary institutions of learning include polytechnics, colleges of education, universities and research institutes, libraries has been the centre of academic activities where both staff and students meet. The agricultural research institutes in Nigeria also have libraries attached to them for the parent organisation's needs. These types of libraries are concerned with literature of particular subject or group of subjects with targeted audience.

In the agriculture industry, such as policy makers, educators, students, development partners, members of the private sectors and extension personnel with the support from the academic library services need high quality, relevant up to date and timely agricultural information to enable them make good strategic policies to boost agricultural development, in order to transform the agricultural sector and to impact on the transformation of the Nigerian economy there is need for Nigeria to tap into the globally available information resources. Such available information resources are the existing free data base.

Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA) and The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) and web based software programs like wikis and blogs or posters from the library. With the above database sources information can be conveyed to agricultural students and the faculty.

Valerie et al (2010) stated three major policies by Nigeria Strategy Support Program (NSSP) of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) that the implementation of Nigeria's national development plans by strengthening agricultural sector policies and strategies through;

- Enhanced knowledge, information, data and tools for the analysis, design and implementation of pro-poor, gender-sensitive and environmentally sustainable agricultural and rural development policies and strategies in Nigeria.
- Strengthened capacity for government agencies research institutions, and other stakeholders to carry out and use applied research that directly informs agricultural and rural policies and strategies and
- Improved communication linkages and consultations between policy makers, policy analysts and policy beneficiaries on agricultural and rural development policy issues.

Challenges of Academic Libraries in Nigeria

Academic Libraries in Nigeria are expected to acquire, process, preserve and disseminate recorded information, enlightens the users and the community of scholars it serves and making available factual information that will guide their actions and make an input towards national development. At present there is gross under funding of libraries which affects information provision for national development.

Ifidon (1995) and Kiondu (2004) have also identified gross under funding of libraries as a major obstacle in the acquisition and their services. Inadequate trained personnel in research works and publishing industry (Sobolaje and Ogunmodede, 2015).

Alasa and Kelechukwu (1999) identified problems militating against the use of information communication technology facilities in libraries in Nigeria as:

- i. Poor and inadequate telecommunication facilities
- ii. Poor level of computer literacy even within the academic community
- iii. Poor computer facilities
- iv. Poor level of awareness of internet facilities in the academic community
- v. Minimum involvement of academic institutions in network building and diffusion in Africa
- vi. Ignorance if decision or policy makers of the power of information network on the economic and industrial development of a nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of academic libraries and information resources in the developmental process of any nation cannot be overemphasised. The level and quality of occupational participation and productivity of a community of people are relevant contributory factors to the level of economic and over all development of any nation. Reading provides the vital skills for both work and life and is a paramount building in education. According to Akomolafe (2012) the inability to read for whatever reasons can act as an impediment to the development of any nation. The greatest resource for development is the human resources and there is no nation that can develop without her human resources coupled with a standard academic library. Therefore Sobolaje and Ogunmodede (2015) stated that it is pertinent that academic libraries should:

Academic Libraries as a Vehicle for National Development in Nigeria

- i. Be equipped by employing high calibre people who are graduate so they can give quality contributions to national development in spheres of life.
- ii. There is need for Nigerian government to take information as tools that aid the enhancement of economic development and this can be achieved by making use of research works that emanates mostly from universities and research institutes that were kept in the academic library.
- iii. The local, state and federal government should collaborate in funding academic library and make it more responsive to researchers needs in the country.
- iv. There should be a collaboration with librarians, information scientists, researchers and extension Agents to educate farmers on the use of library as a resource of information at the village level so that the horizon of farmers knowledge could be broadened, and therefore break the reluctance of farmers to accept agricultural innovations. This will also accelerate the agricultural transformation agenda of the present government in Nigeria, and
- v. Academic librarians should seek partnership with community health centres, non private organisations, academic institutions, other libraries for adequate funding and information resource provision.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that academic library play a significant role in the development of a nation. For a nation to develop it need quality information, therefore academic library should be put in place to provide the needed information resources, since the academic library is referred to as a reservoir of information that are most reliable and professionally managed and can be sought for by users to professionalise their skills and for nation building. Apart from the provision of information for decision making, the library also contributes to economic development of Nigeria. In Akomolafe (2012) when a trained librarian manages a s well equipped library, users of the library can properly be guided in the usage of the library, exposing them to correct information, knowledge and facts, to be applied in their activities, making them people and building a better nation. The world is now driving towards industrialisation, industries can hardly grow without up to date information on prospects and challenges. Academic library provides information on how to improve productivity, hygiene, information on business activities and promote democracy in Nigeria.

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