

The Role of Library Education in National Development

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ABSTRACT

Library education is as important to the whole education process as the library itself. Libraries and Librarians play very significant roles in knowledge assessment which is relevant to both education and nation building. This review was to examine the importance of library education, emphasizing the role of the librarian in managing the library as an information storehouse, thereby providing access to knowledge for development. It is revealed that the Library is a repository for the world's knowledge and that these materials are made available for human development and best managed by professionally trained librarians. Librarians play significant role in human capital development and it is the professional training that makes the individual librarians. The use of ICT infrastructure provides the library with limitless access to information which provides vast range of knowledge to support education and national development. This study therefore recommends among others that the library school curriculum should be reviewed to include training in the use of ICT and government at all levels should partner with librarians in their quest to revive reading culture in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Library education, information, National Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Library education as an information based course has a major role to play in ensuring that reading is revived in Nigeria most especially now that the whole world has become a global village in which every aspect of development is information based. Information is a vital element in national development, the availability of information tools and the ability to put these tools to good use is deemed as source of power. This source of power enforces national development which is the ability of a country to evolve a process of expansion that can bring about improvement in the life of the people. Development is based on human factor and political development; therefore for national development to take place, it depends on good government policies that must rally round the people's welfare like in the area of good health, education and skill acquisition.

Education as defined by Halsey (2009) is a system of formal teaching and learning as conducted through schools and other institutions. In other words, education is a process of imparting and acquiring knowledge through teaching and learning especially at school or similar institution. In the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, education is described as an 'instrument par excellence' for effecting national development. An individual's mental development depends on the society they live in and the type of information they are exposed to either in school, or outside the school. This is why the spread of social vices among the youths today can be traced down to lack of moral education in our schools. According to Mamvoto and Mutasa(2004) schooling and literacy are the main indicators for the growth and maturation of human resources needed for development.

Education is an agent for National development; therefore there is need for every individual to acquire education for self development in order to be able to contribute positively to national development. Igbuzor (2006) posits that an educated nation is a developed nation. In the same vein, Khan (2003) asserts that the development of human resources is a key element for improvement in any organization, society or nation. The library which is a collection of books and other informational materials is very important in educational process and personal cognitive development. According to Agwu and Kalu (2011) the foundation for development of all civilization lies with vibrant educational system and at the epicenter of this value is a sustainable reading culture, and that a nation which appreciates reading learns from the experiences of other nations which are technologically ahead. Reading adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. It opens up a whole new world from how the reader sees himself and others; it enables creativity to blossom in the reader and gives him the tool to explore his talent while learning about himself and his society (Onwubiko, 2010). Osuigwe, Udeze, and Anunobi,(2011) posits that a reading society is empowered by information for exploits in different fields. Also Oriade (2009) asserts that books and reading contribute to professional and academic success, self discovery, cultural awareness, self expression, engaged citizenship and collective good, and that reading recreates man and makes him a thinker and philosopher.

Trends in Library Education

The library can be said to be the store house for the world's intellectual property and a center for dissemination of knowledge. Librarians, who are the custodians of information, play active roles in information dissemination to knowledge seekers. Initially, there was no formal training for librarians; young people only learned to be librarians while on the job with more experienced practitioners and librarian's duties then did not require specialized professional training. However, since the late 19th century, Librarian's tasks gradually started becoming more complex and more dependent on technology. Hence, the study of Library Science moved from the work setting to professional schools in the universities and the polytechnics. In the United States and Canada, education designed for the professional librarian is at the post graduate level whereby the prospective librarians attend one or two years professional education programmes leading to a master's degree in library science or its equivalent such as information science (Halsey 2009). The Carnegie Corporation in collaboration with the British government founded the first regional library school in Africa in Ghana in 1944. The corporation also in 1960, established the library school at Ibadan, Nigeria. Now known as the school of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, it offers paraprofessional training and bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees to enable students to become professional librarians (Halsey 2009).

Traditionally, professional librarians studied subjects in the liberal arts, such as literature or history before beginning their professional education. However, many librarians now have their undergraduate degrees in the natural sciences, computer science, business and other related areas.

History of Modern Library Education Programme

History recorded that American Librarian Melvin Dewey began the first formal education programme for training librarians in 1887 at Colombia College (now Colombia University) in New York where he was a librarian and that the success of his training programme for highly skilled professional librarians soon led other universities, institutes of technology and large public libraries to establish their own professional degree programmes in library science. Early library schools' teaching was based mostly on providing students with experience in actual libraries. However, this practice began to change from 1923 when Charles Williamson produced a publication which served as a guide for library training. Williamson's publication called for an increase in educational theory of librarianship, development of professional journals and other literature on the profession. In the first part of 20th century graduates after the completion of 4 years began to receive bachelor's degree in library science and in the 1950s universities began granting library science a professional degree called Master's degree in Library science or M. L .S. degree. In Nigeria many universities offer both Bachelor and Master's degree as can be found in the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB)'s brochure.

The skill and level of specialization expected of librarians increases by the day, giving cause for schools of library science to adjust their curriculum accordingly from time to time. Most of these schools have adopted the use of modern technology, accruing to the growing number of courses in information science. Information science merges various aspects of librarianship with components of technology such as computer programming, telecommunications, and database management and computer graphics. It also incorporates levels of cognition which study the manner in which people process information and their interaction with machines. In this process of incorporation, other science programmes such as computer science, artificial intelligence, mathematics, philosophy, engineering, business, and fields of communication are also included.

This interdisciplinary background creates a broad knowledge of library automation systems, budgets, and on line research and cataloging. Since the 1980s, most schools of library science have become schools of library and information science. Most importantly, all library education programmes basically provide courses in cataloging and classification, reference, library management and collections development. Students in most schools also have the opportunity to develop a degree of specialization, by taking advanced courses in particular library functions such as medical librarianship, public librarianship, law librarianship. Library systems are continually changing and there is the need for employees to update their education and training in order to keep up with the progress. Agwu and Kalu (2011) posit that there is need to retrain librarians to have more interest in the attitude of library users towards book. They believe that librarians seem not to have done enough to promote reading and literacy. For this to happen, most library and information science schools offer a range of continuing education courses designed for library employees who wish to update or expand their skills in library science. In addition, various professional associations offer continuing education courses for library employees in form of workshops, or short courses.

Role of Library Education in National Development

Many people have carried out studies on the role of librarians and libraries to human endeavors and to national development. Bearing in mind that it is the professional training that makes the individual librarians, it is assumed in this study that both the role of librarians and role of library education are synonymous because you cannot be a librarian without having library education. Pollard (2008) opines that libraries are able to bridge educational, economic, and social divides that challenge communities. While Krolak (2005) asserts that libraries play a major role in the promotion of literacy by making reading materials available to all thereby optimizing human development through education. These can only be possible in a situation where a library is managed by a professionally trained librarian. A well stocked library in both print and non print materials but not managed by a trained librarian, will not be put to the best use.

According to Chigbu (2004) modern libraries were founded to make them instruments of education to all members of the society where it is situated, and for this reason, librarians and all knowledge providers are significant in human capital development in order to continue to improve standards. Hence they are strategically positioned in academic institutions which are centers of knowledge management and human capital development. It is noteworthy to mention that in this paper professionally trained librarians are the ones called librarians. Chigbu and Uzoagba (2011) assert that librarians and libraries play very significant roles in knowledge assets management which is relevant to both education and nation building and these librarians are active partners in drawing of national development plans in all nations. Librarians play active role in information management through selection, procurement, packaging and dissemination of information resources for utilization by manpower trainers and trainees. The use of ICT infrastructure provides the library with limitless access to information which provides vast range of knowledge to support education and national development. Mamvoto and Mutasa (2004) have 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. Library education assists in provision of relevant information to the different strata of the society thus help in achieving developmental goals.

The basic functions of the library are to select, acquire, store, package, and disseminate information to users for the development of individuals and for national building. Hawkin (2002), while supporting this, opines that knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness, increased wealth and prosperity. The extent to which a library can perform these functions depends on the quality and ability of the librarian to interpret user's queries and be able to employ the necessary search engine in order to satisfy the user's information needs. This is the importance of library education. The more qualified and competent the librarian, the better the services the library will render to its clientele. A qualified, trained librarian with the modern trends in library education knows the different approaches that can be used to increase reading habit in both the young and adult library users.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of Libraries and books in the developmental process of any nation cannot be overemphasized; the development of any nation in this information age is dependent on the ability of its citizens to access relevant information that could be used to harness such development. Reading provides the vital skills for both work and life and it is a principal building block in education, without which no true educational revolution can take place. The inability to read for whatever reasons can act as an impediment to the development of any nation. Library education is as important to nation building as the library itself because without the training there cannot be librarians, it is the professional training that makes the individual librarians. In view of the important role the librarians have to play in building reading culture and increasing literacy level in the country, better attention should be paid by government to librarian's education. The library school curriculum should be expanded to accommodate the new trends in librarianship thereby emphasizing the use of ICT. Also government both at federal and state levels must partner with librarians in their quest for reviving reading culture in the country by so doing government will be putting a round peg in a round hole. When a well trained librarian manages a 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 daily activities, making them better people and building a better nation.

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