

REPOSITIONING LIBRARIES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: POLICY, CULTURE AND ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Of greater relevance to education is the source of information in any citadel of leaning. This review x-rayed the possibilities of repositioning libraries in colleges of education for national development, taking into consideration issues policy, culture and ethics . It was observed that the Library is central to the provision of all types of information resources that empowers societies to produce highly resourceful people to impact positively on the society thus enhancing national development. Based on the issues unveiled by the study, it was concluded that there cannot be any meaningful development without well-thought out policies in social, political, cultural and ethical spheres of a nation. Libraries provide the linkage of being the national repository of these resources, and deserve special attention from the political and intellectual leadership.

Keywords: Library, colleges of education, national development, policy, culture, ethics

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the present government's efforts at developing the country and making it one of the 20 most developed economies of the world by 2020 (vision 20-2020) can be traced to the millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is a product of the millennium summit held in September 2000 of world leaders, in which it adopted the millennium declaration. This declaration include, committing their nations to reduce poverty; improve health; and promote peace, human rights and environmental sustainability. The target date for the attainment of these goals is 2015. It is in essence a global compact between developed and developing nations (Ibrahim, 2008).

In its bid to fast-track the realization of the MDGs and the vision 20-2020, the late president Yar' Adua drafted the seven point Agenda, which is presently being implemented with great zeal. The position or area of the Agenda that affects the library directly is the Fourth agenda – which has to do with Human capital Development. This entails the provision of quality health, education and social protection for empowering the population to achieve sustainable national development/self actualization. Libraries play a crucial role in manpower development for the economy.

Repositioning is derived from 'position', which according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007) means "the placewhere somebody or something is meant to be; the correct place". The word has many meanings but for

the purpose of this study, it shall use the one that has been given above. Thus 'repositioning' would mean putting again, something in the correct place. And by implication, it means that such a thing is not in the correct or right place any more, hence the need to reposition it.

As a mundane definition expressed in a generic sense, a library is a collection centre of sources of information. But a more elaborate description of a library and one which conforms to current trends and developments is that given by Ifidon and Ifidon (2007:54) that:

A library can best be described as the key to agricultural development; the rocky foundation for an effective educational system; the secret behind the success of many private sector organizations and some government parastatals; and instrument of conflict prevention and conflict resolution; a tool for administrative effectiveness; a requirement for all health workers and operations of medical databases whether in orthodox or alternative medicine; the main weapon of security operatives; a magnetic attraction for investors added value to services and products and promotion of international trade; and mandatory requirement for planning and provision of amenities.

The above description of a library appears all encompassing of all types of libraries and portrays the library as an enabler of sustainable development in society. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007) defines 'development' as "the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger etc." National development therefore means a situation in which a nation, state or country gradually grows until it becomes advanced, stronger and prosperous in all aspects of life. According to Ita (2009), National development involves all attempts at alleviating poverty and enhancing the quality of life of the average citizen. It includes the ability of the citizens to realize their potentials and lives of dignity and fulfillment; the correcting of the prevalent socio-political and economic inequalities, oppression, and justice which inhibits the effectiveness of the individual's innate abilities for the common good of society.

It is for this reason that the late president Yar' Adua's administration places emphasis on good governance as a prerequisite for national development. Good governance ensures the provision for basic necessities of life, security of life and property, food, good health, shelter, and qualitative education for our children. Where these are lacking, it is obvious that there is no development of any form. Development also means higher Gross Domestic Product (GDPs), better quality of life and a state of national well-being and consciousness in which information and knowledge are both cause and effect. Information and knowledge are the ingredients for development, which are the purview of libraries.

INFORMATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Opeke (2004), cited by Okey (n,d). Information has received a widespread acceptance as the essential feature of production, consumption and exchange in the modern era. The world has entered an era where the source of wealth and power is increasingly from information and human mental creativity as

compared to physical resources. The concept of an informed society implies awareness that there is a process of intellectualism in modern societies which requires increasing number of people to possess a stock of knowledge enabling them to make creative use of the enormous potential of information (Erant, 1991) as cited by Okey (n,d). Library is central to the provision of all types of information resources that empowers societies to produce highly resourceful people to impact positively on national development.

In the present information society, information has assumed a central role in the emerging economic and social order. It is now considered as the most relevant factor and resource in any human endeavour, especially as we move towards a knowledge-based globalize economy. Information is thus a sine-qua-non to the development of any nation.

LIBRARY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Library functions in developmental purposes include helping massive literacy of the citizens; the improvement of knowledge and skills for positive productivity and enabling the individual to develop his full potentials and widening the range of his perceptions, interests and skills (Metzger, 1991) as cited by Onohwakpur, (2005).

If information is a crucial factor in national development, then this 21st century government must recognize the need for information as a means of development. But Nigeria is still struggling with the issue of development because good governance has faced several problems over the years. In advanced countries, libraries have been identified as one of the key institutions for open access to information which is crucial for a democratic societal development. Unfortunately, in all the past and recent development plans of government, libraries have never been considered. Hence, resources and institutions are two important influences on national development, as they are the determining factors for achieving goals. Thus, there is a clear need in the information society to maintain an institute which is concentrating on collecting and organizing information and offering general access to it. Developing countries need quick access to resources and this include information resources (Human Resource Development, 2002) as cited by malekabachizadeh (2008).

The process of advancement depends on knowledgeable, creative responsible and self confident people. Progress relies on the power of the people. That includes librarians who are providing useful information for individuals and organizations that play a crucial role in development. Libraries provide an environment where every user can flourish (Nowkarzi, 2004) as cited by Malekabudizadeh (2008). To play this role in development the information society development demands a redefinition of the position and objectives of all the institutions which work with information, knowledge and culture. The general development of the information society is pushing towards re-evaluation of all the institutions which work with information, data, and knowledge – indirectly also with policy, culture and ethics. Libraries are especially important now when the whole idea of education is stressing more and more independent learning and acting. All citizens must be able to find

and use information. It is the key raw material – but a zero resource, if there are no access points to it. No other institution carries out the unique function of the library (Ryynanen, 1999).

However, the challenge to modern society is that the basic resource of development which is knowledge is developing from information so rapidly and dynamically. Hence, resources and institutions are important influences on national development. While development is associated with economic progress, the economy is not the only factor. Access to information is a crucial factor including issues on policy, culture and ethics.

POLICY, CULTURE AND ETHICS

The Webster's Dictionary (2003) defines policy as a definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency, facility etc" a course of procedure conforming to or considered with reference to prudence or expediency" policy is also synonymous with "strategy, principle, rule", "acumen, astuteness, skill, art, ingeniousness." For Uhegbu, (2008), policy can be viewed as a plan of action, a statement of aims and objectives especially when made by government.

In the words of Anderson, (1979) as cited by Ujo, (2001) public policy consists of guidelines developed by governmental bodies and officials to regulate official actions that are influenced by non-governmental factors. To this extent, policy could be regarded as a process and a guiding principle whether individual or public policy. If policies are properly articulated, they can lead to good governance and national development. Policy can provide guidelines especially in the information industry. A national information policy would ensure that the right information is provided to the right person, at the right time, in the right place and in the right format. It would ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Nigerians in all spheres, making provision for library and information centers and of activities by properly equipping them (Uhegbu, 2008).

Culture is the sum total of the beliefs, ways of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society (Longman, 1995). The Cambridge Advanced learners' Dictionary (2003), defines culture as "the way of life, especially to general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". Huntington (2000) explained that culture refers to the entire way of life of a society, its values, practices, symbols, institutions and human relationships.

Nigeria is a country with rich culture. Its many ethnic groups have varying unique cultures. In linking the Nigerian culture or way of life with development, it is pertinent to note that just as there are cultural practices that inhibit development, there are also cultural practices that foster development. Despite the diversity of cultures, there is a foundation of shared values, attributes and institutions that bind Nigerians. The shared values are such that could promote human dignity and facilitate development. The 1999 constitution makes provision for the promotion of cultural values as vehicle for national development. Section 23 stipulated that the national ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social, justice, religious tolerance,

self-reliance and patriotism. To this extent their cultural values and way of life can be taken as a practice and a guiding principle and acceptable ways of doing things in a society. Osahor (2005) opines that every nation has its aspirations and its core values, ethics and national ethos derived from these aspirations. He further stressed that national values also guide the performance, attitude, work ethics and expertise of the citizens. Such national values are tents which make citizen excel and always want the best for their country. National values directly affect nation building. It is the presence of these values that makes citizens protect state properties, funds and other assets. They are the factors that guide the relationship between and among citizens. When we consider culture as embracing the whole gamut of human experience, especially attitude to life and the way we interact with environment, one cannot but agree that culture, like policy is also guiding principle.

Ethics is defined as a code of moral principle that set a standard of behaviour, the principle against which we measure behaviour, to ascertain whether it is good or bad, wrong or right (Olusanya, 2001). Meriam Webster's 'online Dictionary defines ethics as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad with moral duty and obligations" and, "the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group." Ethical behaviour thus involve conforming to acceptable standards are acceptable as good enough for the society; they could be described as ethical values. Ethical values and conduct can also be taken as a procedure to guiding principles. Value according to Pearle (1992) is a principle that reflect an ideal moral standard by which individuals guide their thoughts and actions, and from which society as a whole ultimately benefits.

The code of conduct Bureau is an official institution which sets the standard of ethical conduct for employees in Nigeria. There are general principle of ethical conduct and specific ethical standards. These principles and standards broadly define the obligations of public service. By observing these general principle and specific standards, employees help ensure that citizens can have confidence in the integrity of government programmes and operations. Established ethical policies do exist therefore to foster a culture of ethical behaviour as a sure step to ensuring high ethical standards. Building and maintaining an ethics-oriented culture starts at the top, these will help create an ethical workforce culture needed for national development (Crum Packer, 2008).

CONCLUDING REMARK

Repositioning the library for national Development in the context of policy, culture and Ethics means putting the library in advantage point to process, package and disseminate national policies, culture and Ethics to engender National development. The library as the custodian of knowledge in the age of information and Communication Technology (ICT) must be in a position to have national policies on the tips of its fingers. Similarly, the way of life of people and moral values must be adequately projected by the library in the collection of cultural and Ethical materials to advance the cause of Nigeria. Providing easy access, retrieval and use of policy, cultural and ethical materials to the citizenry will ensure development. There can be

no development without well-thought out policies in social, political, cultural and ethical spheres of a nation. Libraries provide the linkage of being the national repository of these resources, and deserve special attention from the political and intellectual leadership.

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