Libraries in Democratic Governance and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper aimed to examine the issues in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria; assess the role of libraries in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria and identify the challenges facing libraries in performing their roles effectively in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The methodology adopted was 'contextual analysis', which involved the review of publications on the subject matter, from library collections and the Internet.

Findings: The paper discovered that libraries are very valuable in democratic governance and national development. However, many organisations and governments do not fund libraries adequately. The paper also discovered that libraries in Nigeria are faced with many challenges such as inadequate funding.

Implication: The paper suggested recommendations which include among others, that: governments should ensure that all stake-holders are involved in the democratization process by holding transparent and credible elections at all levels of governance; governments should ensure that core values of honesty, transparency, accountability, nationalism, ethnic and religious tolerance etc. are inculcated in the citizens through religious institutions and government agencies.

Originality/Value: Libraries of all kinds should be adequately funded by their parent bodies for improved service delivery. Also, libraries should formulate strong and robust policies that would ensure effective and efficient service delivery to the polity and strictly effect their implementation.

Key words: Libraries, Democratic Governance, National Development

Introduction

The restoration of democratic governance in Nigeria on 20th May 1999 was a watershed and of remarkable development because of the hopes and promises which democracy brings. In Nigeria, as in many African countries there are multifarious and multidimensional challenges confronting our democracy. These challenges include sectarian tensions and violence, the emergence of ethnic militias, the malaise of corruption, and most recently the emerging issues on the question of sovereignty governance in Nigeria, which has been characterized by bad leadership, unbridled corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, legislative lawlessness, executive recklessness and judicial rascality (Dada, Udoaka and Dada, 2013). In this regard, since good governance is a precondition for national development and sustainable democracy, then there is the need to nurture and sustain our democracy so as to ensure sustainable national development.

Modern libraries are unfolding society's learning potential by providing information on community education and local history. This access to information is essential to not only enable educated and informed citizens to participate in a democratic global community but also enhances democratic governance and national development. As Ojeifo (2015) rightly notes:

> *Knowledge is now recognized as the driver of productivity and economic growth, leading to a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance. Knowledge based economy stems from the fuller recognition of the place of information and technology in today's world.*

Thus, knowledge or information plays a critical role in enhancing democratic governance and national development.

The aim of this paper is to show the relevance of libraries in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria. The specific objectives are: to examine the issues in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria; to assess the role of libraries in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria; to identify the challenges facing libraries in performing their roles effectively in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria; and to proffer recommendations that would enhance libraries' performance in information services delivery for democratic governance and national development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Democracy has been generally described as 'government of the people, for the people and by the people'. This definition has laid the platform for establishing the concept of 'democratic governance', which has to do with "*developing institutions and processes that are responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens including the poor and that promotes development*" (UNDP, 2016). Thus, democratic governance involves a process that takes the interests of all stake holders (the electorates, politicians and government) into consideration in the democratic process. The effective performance of these stake holders in the democratization process has the propensity of ensuring national development in Nigeria.

However, libraries as information service delivery outlets play an important role in ensuring effective democratic governance and national development in Nigeria. They provide and equip the citizenry with relevant information that will enable them participate actively in the democratization process. Libraries harbor information to do with voting rights, election procedures, civic education, national core values, citizens' moral obligations to society, etc. But, much as libraries are expected to stock information that would enhance democratic governance and national development in Nigeria, the question that needs asking is, how effective are libraries in providing these information, what are the challenges confronting libraries in supporting democratic governance and national development in Nigeria? And how can these challenges be surmounted? This paper therefore attempts to provide answers to these questions.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this paper is 'contextual analysis', which involved the review of publications on the subject matter, from library collections and the Internet.

Conceptual Clarifications

Library:

A library has been defined as a collection of sources of information that have been carefully selected and organized for use by library patrons. According to Krause (2007), a library is a building that houses and catalogues books, magazines, journals, microfilms, maps, government publications, and other resources. Modern day libraries regardless of type are characterized by collections of electronic information resources such as CD-ROMs, Internet, online databases, video tapes, flash drives, hard disk etc. and a chunk of print information resources (Mamman, 2016).

Democratic Governance:

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (2016) views democratic governance as "*a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions.*" Working in close partnership with civil society organisations, the Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights (ODIHR), support the efforts of participating states to improve democratic governance by increasing the level of women's participation in politics, strengthening parliaments, developing multiparty political landscapes, preventing the abuse of state resources and following up on the recommendations made by election observer missions. UNDP (2016) describes democratic governance as a concept in which more countries than ever before are working to build democratic governance and that their challenge is to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens including the poor and that promote development. UNDP helps countries strengthen electoral and legislative systems, improve access to justice and public administration and develop a greater capacity to deliver basic services to those most in need.

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This definition is apt and would be adopted by the paper.

National Development:

National Development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Measures of improvement may be materials, such as an increase in the gross domestic product or social, such as literacy rates and availability of health care (www.ask.com). Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) consider national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. According to them, this is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the actualization of strategies mapped out by the government. This definition is apt for the paper and has been adopted.

Issues in Democratic Governance and National Development in Nigeria

Issues in democratic governance and national development in Nigeria have dominated the political terrain since Nigeria gained Independence in 1960. Ojo (2008) contends that in contemporary time democracy has turned out to be the most supported political tool for development and social change which has attained near global acclaim and admiration by many world leaders. According to him, although it is contestable, the reasons for this vary. "*First, democracy has gained acceptability as a form of government based on equity and justice. Secondly, it purports to uphold the rule of law, and as well guarantee the preservation of human rights*". The author examines some strategies for sustainable development in Nigeria. He highlights existing strategies for development in the country, progress and challenges in implementing the strategies and further identifies measures which when adopted and implemented, will likely change the social, economic and political condition of the country for economic growth and national development.

Similarly, Igwe (2010) posits that since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has been embarking upon the gargantuan task of nation-building to launch the country into socio-economic, security and prosperity, and that this has not been possible due to combined factors of long military dominance in power, poor economic planning and irresponsible democratic leadership. The paper establishes a nexus between democracy and development and maintained that democracy had not been able to deliver the much anticipated development dividends. The paper concludes that there should be organic linkage between democracy and development so as to enthrone a society of political and socio-economic indicators of modernization and development.

Looking at the issue from another perspective, Lawal and Olukayode (2012) aver that democracy and development are global phenomena and that every country in the world aspires and claims to be democratic. This, according to them is because of the role of the later in developmental process. The paper examines the linkage between democracy and development in Nigeria, using ethics as a yardstick for democratic adherence. The paper adopts the content analysis approach to source its data and concludes that democracy is an ingredient of development and that it must therefore be sustained.

Similarly, Majekodunmi (2012) remarks that Nigeria's present democratization, which commenced with the fourth republic on May 29. 1999 started with great expectations, and that since then, the nature of the democratic project has been the subject of debate in various circles. The paper examines the linkage between democratization and development using a contextual analysis of the Nigerian experience under the fourth republic and argues that while democratization could be harbinger of development, the present state of democratization in Nigeria gives cause for concern, as it leans towards the direction of disempowerment. It concludes that addressing the problem of democratization and development must involve all stakeholders, and this is a major step towards stabilizing and entrenching democracy and national development in Nigeria.

Making a global comparison of the issue, Jamo (2013) asserts that Nigeria is the fourth largest democracy (with a population of over 160 million) and the world's sixth largest oil supplier and is blessed with economic potentials, but majority of the Nigerian population is poor due to bad governance. The paper adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the relationship between democracy and development in the Nigerian context, dwelling

on the fourth republic. Relying on poverty reduction, employment generation, effective health care delivery, revenue and expenditure, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Foreign exchange rate, Good governance and Human rights Development Index (HDI), the paper argues that Nigeria experienced fourteen years of uninterrupted democratic rule, and available evidence revealed that there is no clear relationship between democracy and development in Nigerian context. In essence, according to the author, the first fourteen years of democratic dispersion in the country has not improved remarkable development. The paper recommends strict adherence to the principle of democracy and good governance as a panacea for national development.

Dada, Udoaka and Dada (2013) also concur that democracy is unarguably globally recognized as the best form of government for any nation because it guarantees liberty and creates enabling environment for the emergence of political institutions that can peacefully compete to form a government. The paper examines democracy as an imperative to good governance and national development in Nigeria. It articulates the normative frame work for good governance and argues that Nigeria is in dire need of good governance and responsible leadership. It contends that excessive greed, unbridled corruption, lack of transparency and accountability and such other vices that are obtained in Nigeria, are anti-democratic agents and denial of good governance. The paper recommends revolutionary overhaul of the three arms of government and good administrative institutions in order to achieve good governance and sustain the current democratic governance in Nigeria. A recent development on the issue as revealed by Okeke (2014) states that democracy is at the cross roads in Nigeria. According to him, national development has altogether only truly manifested in the inscrutable imagination of Nigeria's national development planners.

Libraries, Democratic Governance and National Development in Nigeria: The Nexus

Libraries play a critical role in democratic governance and national development of countries. Libraries have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong opportunities with emphasis on service,

identifying user needs and providing solutions. Modern libraries are unfolding the community's learning potential by providing information on community issues such as health, employment, continuing education and local history. This equitable access to information is essential to enable educated and informed citizens to participate in a democratic global community. Libraries are also custodians of the local and national culture by storing popular and academic knowledge and materials for current and future generations. Public libraries especially, play the most important role worldwide in helping bridge the information gap by providing free access to information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet (Krolak, 2006).

A best practice study of German Bertelsmann, stiftung (Stiftung cited by Krolak, 2006) showed that the library systems in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, United States and Singapore are modern examples of highly developed library systems that are impacting on democratic governance and national development. They share common trait - they have established themselves as an integral part of a national education and information strategy based on library laws and appropriate funding, they offer free access to information, are highly service-oriented and constantly improve their services through cooperation and networking. These, according to the author, are hybrid libraries that offer traditional media and have a strong focus on providing access to online information. As a result, they are used and highly appreciated by 75-90% of the population.

In developed democracies, libraries cooperate with other community organizations in offering various services and activities which include author readings, creative writing classes, introduction to information and communication technologies and the Internet, reading groups, exhibitions, summer reading programmes, study support discussion groups and art classes such as drama, poetry and song. There are also library-based literacy programmes, which provide adult literacy classes, and have a wide range of resources to support the programmes. The information resources include printed and audio books, magazines for all reading levels, videos and newspapers (Krolak, 2006). All these are

impacting on democratic governance and national development of these countries.

Similarly, Kamba (n.d.) believes that information does not only expand the possibilities of social, political, educational and economic development of countries, but facilitates their awareness and empowerment. According to him *"information is an asset and a resource for development of communities, governments, agencies and target population"*. In this regard, people need information to make informed decisions which can have meaningful impact on their lives. People need information to do with their health, businesses – such as agriculture, trading, tourism, education etc. This explains why Panos, cited by Kamba (n.d.) posits that *"access to information is an essential condition for development"* not only for the individual, or group but society as a whole. Kamba sums up the critical role of information in democratic governance, productivity and national development thus:

> *Today, information is conceived as important resource that contributes immensely towards the development of a nation, especially in this era of information explosion. It provides the mainstay for the development of knowledge, the foundation for innovations, the resource for informed citizenry, and as a result, becomes a key commodity for the progress of society.*

A study by Daudu and Mohammed (2013) on the issue reveals that the purpose of socio-economic activities in every country is to bring about national development and that information service delivery plays a crucial role in ensuring the occurrence of socio-economic development. They advise that modern information technologies such as radio, television, newspapers, Internet and mobile phones should be used in rural areas for information delivery. This, according to them, would further boost democratic governance and national development in Nigeria. Similarly, Agbo and Onyakweodiri (2014) examine the types of libraries, their functions and roles in national development. The paper discusses in great depth the role of library services in virtually all sectors of the economy – education, health, agriculture,

tourism, management, legislation etc. It concludes that information promotes and empowers citizens participation in the democratic process, maintains rule of law, helps in the policy making process of political leadership, which ensures the establishment of a sustainable, peaceful and developed polity.

Effective dissemination of information to the Nigerian rural populace, according to Issa and Sunday (n.d.) facilitates good governance. The paper underscores the essence of information, particularly its effective dissemination as a facilitator of good governance at all levels. It examines the continued neglect of our rural populace as an antithesis to good governance at all levels and recommends a robust rural information system for rural communities, which must consider local content, as this would bolster democratic governance and national development in Nigeria.

In a related development, Rafiu and Sodiq (2015) investigate the effect of library services on the promotion of good governance in Nigeria. The study revealed that effective library services engender good governance in Nigeria. Challenges such as inadequate funding, insufficient qualified manpower, inadequate support from parent institutions and lack of interest by library users hindered effective library services. The study recommends that increase in funding, and recruitment of qualified personnel was considered as the panacea for libraries to play their roles in providing relevant information to policy makers, political office holders and those charged with positions of leadership in Nigeria.

A similar study by Nwafor and Ilorah (2015) examine the publiclibrary as an agent of social and political transformation in Anambra State. The paper reviews the services, activities, resources, manpower and facilities offered to position it for the political re-engineering required for democracy to be sustained. The findings indicate that current awareness programmes, information repackaging and community-based services of public libraries are not viable though they are areas for increasing civic information awareness. However, scarcity of funds, inadequate manpower development, high rate of illiteracy, lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate policy formulation/implementation and socio-cultural

factors were highlighted as hindrances to the success of the these ideals.

Challenges Facing Libraries

Poor Funding: A major challenge faced by most libraries in Nigeria is that of poor funding. Both governments owned libraries and business libraries face this problem. While government libraries maybe underfunded due to poor leadership and government policies, business libraries are not given a high priority in the organizations' budgets. Funding therefore poses a great challenge to information management for policy making and governance. The problem of poor funding is listed by Okiy (2005). This goes on to show the negative impact poor funding has in the work of Libraries Poor funding expresses itself in different areas such as poor power supply, poor human resources development, and poor state of telecommunication and ICT infrastructure and the virtual nonexistence of ICT policies. Without the necessary funding, none of the other problems facing ICT application in our libraries could effectively be solved. Also, without increased funding, all advances such as in human resource development are surely doomed (Elisha, 2006).

Inadequacy of Information Resources: The library is an information system. The primary raw materials of a library are the information materials. A library with a beautiful structure and well trained staff without information resources is like a gun without bullets. The case that is prevalent in the Nigerian libraries is where you find grossly inadequate and obsolete information resources in the library. This situation poses as a great problem to the library. Ifidon (2000) noted that "Where a university library in the developed world, such as University of Nottingham, can boast of 307 volumes of books and 0.51 periodical per reader, Nigeria can make do with only two books and 0.3 periodical per reader". Ifidon further noted that "Interlibrary loan facilities would have been a welcome relief. But these are virtually nonexistent. This is not surprising, because each library would rather use its limited facilities to meet the needs of its immediate community before extending its lending facilities to other libraries". This inadequacy of information resources poses a grave challenge to effective rendering of library services by Nigerian libraries.

Lack of ICT and other infrastructural facilities: Nigerian libraries lack infrastructures like steady power supply, internet facilities and even adequate number of computers to support automation. Many libraries have installed Internet facility in the past but none of them is functional presently. This has been due to lack of finance to sustain and maintain these facilities. Ebiwolate (2010) decried the lack of ICT as one of the major problems facing Nigerian libraries especially public libraries. This is primarily caused by inadequate funding of these libraries.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to show the relevance of libraries in enhancing democratic governance and national development in Nigeria. It revealed that there is a linkage between democratic governance and national development; and that for national development to be more realistic in Nigeria all stake-holders must be allowed to play their role effectively in the democratization process. The paper also disclosed the indispensable role of libraries in providing the necessary information that would empower citizens to participate in the democratization process which will ensure good governance and national development in Nigeria. It however, revealed some daunting challenges libraries face in providing effective and efficient information service delivery that would engender democratic governance and national development. Prominent among these are, inadequate funding to procure the relevant information resources, inadequate skilled manpower, lack of effective library cooperation and networking, high rate of illiteracy among library users (citizens), week policy formulation/implementation etc.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in the paper the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Governments (Federal and States) should ensure that all stake-holders are involved in the democratization process by holding transparent and credible elections at all levels of governance.

2. Governments (Federal and States) should ensure that core values of honesty, transparency, accountability, nationalism, ethnic and religious tolerance etc. are promoted by religious institutions

(churches and mosques) and government agencies such as National Orientation Agency, electronic and print media, schools, tertiary institutions and the like.

3. Libraries of all kinds should be adequately funded by their parent bodies for improved service delivery, by ensuring that 10% of the library's budget is devoted to improving the services. Alternatively, they could seek for assistance from agencies (such as TETFund, Foundations and the like) to support their services.

4. Librarians should formulate strong and robust policies that would ensure effective and efficient service delivery to the users/citizens and should strictly effect the implementation of these policies.

5. Interlibrary cooperation/networking should be encouraged among libraries in order to enhance access to information by library users. These would be facilitated through automation of the library functions and services.

6. Skilled manpower with ICT literacy should be employed in libraries of all kinds as this would ensure adequate service delivery to users (citizens). In addition, they should be exposed to regular capacity building programmes to update their knowledge and skills.

7. Libraries should support literacy programmes by not only providing the premises for adult literacy classes but also relevant information resources that enhance literacy.

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