

# Libraries, Industrial Relations, Labour Productivity and National Development

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## Abstract:

**Purpose:** *The study was designed to examine the position of libraries in promoting industrial relations and labour productivity for national development.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *As a theoretical discourse, the definitions and concepts of industrial relations, labour productivity and national development were discussed and fully examined. The centrality of libraries in promoting collective bargaining between employers and employees for productivity to resource economy for national development was x-rayed.*

**Findings:** *The study identified that, the free-flow of relevant and adequate information mediated and provided by the library in any given industry is an ingredient for human resource development. Such information will inform the labour force and promote collective bargaining, thereby establishing good industrial relationship between employer and employee. Such relations will invariably set in labour productivity and national development.*

**Implication:** *The purpose(s) of industrial relations are for the protection of the interest of workers, social equality and creating perfect working conditions for maximum output. There should be labour force for maximum output (productivity) to be achieved. Productivity is the creation of utilities; it is a central determinant for standard of living that resource economic growth. It is therefore implied that without the free-flow of relevant information provided by libraries in any given industry will negate collective bargaining and consequently set in low productivity – which is a vicious cycle of poverty in which many nations are confined in today.*

**Originality/Value:** *Its value lies on the recommended that Libraries and Librarians in any organisation should be properly managed to providing meaningful information that will steer concrete national development.*

**Keywords:** *Industrial Relations, Labour Productivity, Libraries and National Development.*

## Introduction

The word “development” has up till now being loaded with several meanings. This has resulted in a countless of definitions by scholars. While some scholars see development as normative and synonymous with progress, others regard it as multi dimensional, linking changes in structures, capacity, and output. Yet, others view development in terms of the enlargement and mastery of the natural environment by man. Consequently the development of any society today has come to be measured by its military, socio-economic, political, and technological advancement. For example, Aremu (2003) sees development as a process of enhancing the productive forces of a country for the actualization of more prosperous and meaningful life for all its citizens. Accordingly, development in this sense emphasizes growth or advancement, with a positive cultural and socio-economic

tendency of people’s potentials. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, “national” refers to a whole nation. National development, therefore, can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political, and religious advancement of a country or nation.

The library is habitually referred to as the mind of an institution, the brainpower of a society, the only unbeaten repository of knowledge, a live depository of cultural past, sustainers of the intellectual activities that anticipate the future, etc. In practice, the mission of all types of libraries as well as related information centres is to carry out information management that include and not limited to acquisition, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information to users. Users are expected to utilize the information resources, (in whatever format) to satisfy their information needs.

Information and a conducive, environment of its free flow is a vital tool in all forms of human endeavour. It forms a strong nexus for national development. For a nation to develop it needs to have and provide relevant, updated and adequate information on food security, health, democracy, population, education, family planning, youth empowerment, gender equality, conducive environment etc. These are equally needed for industrial relations (IR).

### **Industrial Relations: Meaning and Purpose**

Industrial relationship is all about the relationship between an employee and management. The term 'Industrial Relations' comprises of two terms: 'Industry' and 'Relations'. "Industry" refers to "any productive activity in which an individual (or a group of individuals) is (are) engaged". By "relations" we mean "the relationships that exist within the industry between the employer and his employees." The term industrial relations explain the relationship between employees and management which stems directly or indirectly from union-employer relationship.

Industrial relations are the relationships involving employees and employers within the organizational settings. The field of industrial relations looks at the relationship (dealings) involving management and workers, mostly groups of workers represented by a union. Industrial relations are basically the interactions between employers, employees and the government, and the institutions and associations through which such interactions are mediated. Therefore, there is a tripod stand that formed industrial relations (Employer, Employee and Government).

The term industrial relations have broad as well as narrow viewpoints. Formerly, industrial relations was generally defined to include the relationships and interactions between employers and employees. From this perspective, industrial relations cover all aspects of the employment relationship, including human resource management, employee relations, and union-management (or labour) relations. Now its meaning has become more specific, precise and restricted accordingly. Industrial relations pertains to the study and practice of collective bargaining, trade unionism, and labour-management relations, while human resource management is a separate, largely distinct field that deals with non-union

employment relationships and the personnel practices and policies of employers. Then why industrial relations?

### **Purpose of Industrial Relations**

The requirement for Industrial Relation has arisen to protect the interest of workers for adjusting the reasonable salary or wages. If salaries are attractive, this will attract a flourishing economy and job opportunities will emerge and consequently making huge scope of expansion for the economy. Industrial Relation is also needed for achieving the democracy (social equality) by allowing workers to take part in management, which helps to protect human rights of individual. It also helps the workers to ask for perfect working conditions for producing maximum output. This of course is the ultimate goal of the management (employer). For maximum output (productivity) to be achieved, there must be labour force. Labour force will stimulate labour productivity.

### **Labour Productivity: Definition and Effects**

Productivity is said to be the creation of utilities, and utilities are those goods and services that satisfy human desires. Productivity can be a ratio to measure how well an individual, organization, industry and country converts input resources such as labour, materials, machines into goods and services (Hameed, 2009). According to Chukwuka (2013) the level of productivity is a central determinant of the standard of living which invariably resource economic growth. Low productivity in critical sectors of the economy will set in a 'lack of competitiveness in the global market'. In other words, low productivity is an aspect of the vicious circle of poverty in which many developing nations are confined. Poor standards of living, bad housing, poor transportation, bad conditions in the work place, lack of education etc. reduces workers productivity. Indeed, low productivity in turn reduces the capacity of the society to improve living standards. And poor living standards ultimately set in backwardness in a Nations' development.

Nevertheless, the role of education and training for productivity improvement is much wider than it seems. Scholars such as Babalola (2007) have observed that productivity objectives should be built into the educational systems at any level in the educational pyramid where students will acquire the minimum level of discipline and motivation in this approach to

tasks and problems solving. The principals (Heads of schools) should equip the school libraries with adequate information from researches on the importance of labour productivity. In this manner, students will grow to understand the dignity and purpose of labour. Libraries are there for proper management, provision and dissemination of such information.

### **Library as the Instrument of National Development**

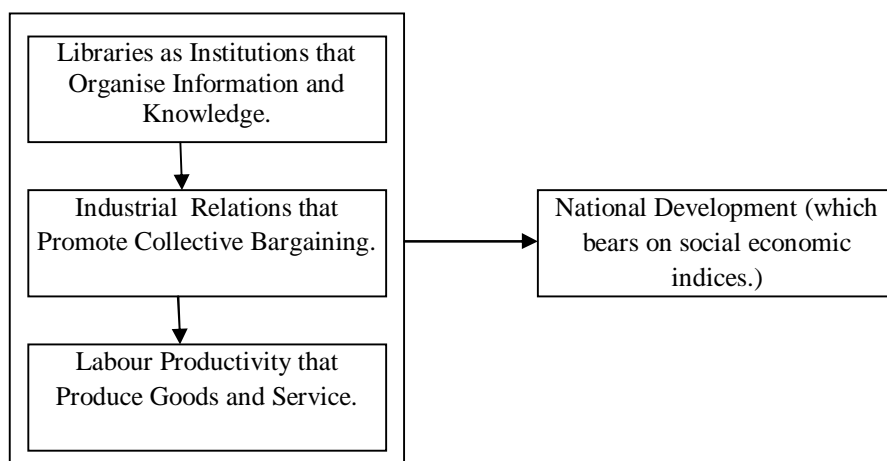
Development has to do with both qualitative and quantitative changes in the life of a people or an individual. At the national level, there is an improvement in the general well-being (socio-economic Indices) of the people while at the individual level, development implies activity, increased skill and capacity, self-discipline, greater freedom, responsibility, and material well-being. Even in this century, it is surprising to note that people view libraries as abstract entity; that it cannot have any impact on their practical lives. Consequently, such people believe that libraries are immaterial to development of whatever sort. This fallacy persists because of people's ignorance of what libraries are all about. They fail to realize that libraries are one of the most (if not the most) useful enterprises ever undertaken by man. This is proved by human development, which shows that libraries have been the maximum force that has contributed in shaping human civilization. To this reason, Owen Meredith, as quoted by Ireland (1884), argued that "It is, however, not to the museum, or the lecture-room, or the drawing-school, but to the library that we must go for the completion of our humanity.

"Unarguably, books put on up from age to age the intellectual wealth of the world." Human knowledge has been advancing enormously ever since, century by century. Every field of human endeavour has had a quantum leap in development, leading to many discoveries and inventions. The two most notable are the internet and cloning, with their use and misuse. Along with the new information and knowledge generated, also come with it new challenges. The

challenges included are methods of storing and preserving the information and knowledge generated. Citizens hardly ever stop to ponder that it is the business of librarians to bring order, clarity, and consistency into all these challenges. At this point, libraries have become "an instrument used to organize knowledge, offer a focus, and then give the citizen a sense of direction out of a warren of confusion" (Anyika, 2005; p. 131).

Still at the personal or individual point, libraries are instrument for the satisfaction of man's curiosity. This is because there is always the desire for man to know and understand life phenomena. Life itself is a continuous process; therefore, the man in his universe will perpetually continue to enquire with the view to satisfying his inquisitiveness. This urge motivates men to satisfy their curiosity. Indeed, the library is the place for inquisitive minds. Library makes people more rational in their actions because one who knows the rational means will usually act in accordance with that means.

For one to act, he/she needs to be informed, it is in this regard that Achitabwino (2007) assert that 'for a nation to develop, it needs to have and provide relevant, updated, and adequate information on food security, health, democracy, population, Education, family planning, youth development, gender equality, environment etc. In the same view, Mamvoto and Mutasa (2004) have observed that adequate and relevant information in all spheres of existence is needed for a nation to develop and its availability and non-availability can dictate the wealth or poverty of a nation. Lending credence to these submissions, Abubakar, (2015) remarked that library schools and information professionals are properly situated in the managing, provision and dissemination of such information for national development. Therefore, the presence of libraries in whatsoever enterprise in the society will certainly enhance positive human activity in that society, with attendant positive national development.



**Conceptual model of Libraries, Industrial Relations, Labour Productivity and National Development (Self Constructed)**

The model shows the libraries as institutions that organises relevant and adequate information for the employees in a given industry. The information harnessed bothers and aligned on the industrial relations. These are indeed tailored for collective bargaining. When collective bargaining is reached, staff will be productive, thereby producing a lot of goods and services. This ultimately will attract positive national development that will bear on social economic indices.

**Conclusion**

The realisation of national development is indeed information driven, information is better organised, stored and preserved in libraries. In view of the importance of libraries to foster industrial harmony for collective bargaining through communication of adequate and relevant information (in whatever format) for all stake holders in any named industry, such libraries should be well expanded, managed and well funded by the named industry. The right information at the right time from the libraries would change the attitude (positively) of the employees (labour force) for high venture with attendant positive national development.

**Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended that Libraries and Librarians in any organisation should be properly managed to providing meaningful information that will steer concrete national development.

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