

Libraries as Instruments for Youth Productivity and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to examine how libraries are influencing youth productivity and National Development in Nigeria.

Design/Methodology /Approach: An exploratory approach through extensive review of relevant literature was adopted for the study. Conceptual classification of the key concepts was done to enable comprehension of the relevance of libraries on youths in enabling them become productive in national development in Nigeria. This was followed by a discussion of the synergy between the concepts in enhancing youth productivity and national development in Nigeria.

Findings: Findings reveal that due to the importance of information as a major factor of production, libraries are considered as highly lucrative institutions in the production process; Nigerian youths as future leaders need access to a wide range of information cutting across academic, business and working environment; libraries as instruments for youth productivity and national development should increase their efforts in making information available as this would yield positive results.

Practical Implication: Inadequate access to comprehensive information among youths could undermine their efforts in contributing to productivity and national development in Nigeria.

Originality/Value: The paper recommended that: Libraries should present information on different kinds of business ideologies and their implementation strategies; librarians should collaborate with different firms, industries and other organizations in organizing workshops, seminars and lectures for youths on how to become more productive; Federal and State governments should partner with multinationals to ensure the development of functional and well-equipped libraries in all educational Institutions and communities; Federal and state governments should ensure accessibility of information for skills acquisition, self-employment, job opportunities, and self-reliance among youths.

Key Words: Libraries, Information, Productivity, Youth, National Development

1.0 Introduction

“...to talk of national development is to talk primarily of the development of the human person” – (Omongbe, 1990)

Libraries are congenial homes of ideas to be enjoyed, valued and used regularly by all. They are the veritable repository of knowledge that underpin socio-economic, political and cultural development of a nation; and are avenues of knowledge that constitute one of the principal instruments in building a richer and better society.

Nigeria, like most other nations of the world, is faced with the problem of productivity and national development. The poor state of productivity and slow pace of development all together qualified Nigeria to be among the nations

being described as third world countries (developing and under-developed countries). It is clear that a nation can never rise beyond its informed state of productivity. To achieve productivity and national development, the vibrant youths of the nation need to be well informed of various productive ideologies on inventions and innovations in order to be able to grow and develop productive minds. The most encompassing goal of development is the progressive realisation of the abilities and talents of each individual (especially the youth) for his/her own satisfaction and enhancement of the good of the community and the nation. And so “to talk of national development is to talk primarily of the development of the human person” – (Omongbe, 1990).

Libraries and information centres are a pivotal point to this progressive realization of abilities and talents as they provide necessary information for self-realisation. This simple analysis shows that the place of libraries in championing the course of production and national development cannot be over-emphasised. This has left none in doubt that if librarians would come together to coordinate self-realisation or development programmes among the youths, then the future of our nation, Nigeria, looks brighter. Therefore, to attain this level, there is a strong need for an urgent clarion call to embrace libraries, which offer broad and convenient access to the various published literature of creative minds acquired across the world. Edward, J. et al (2013).

Information is an instrument of change and fertilizer of the human mind, which is being managed in libraries and disseminated or made easily accessible for the people. Negligence to the call to patronize libraries may incur adverse effect to our productive and national developmental efforts. The future belongs to the youths who make productive use of information and knowledge. With adequate information and libraries, Nigerian youths can achieve their potential and participate actively in local and international affairs in a manner that eschews violence (Stella, 2010). It is very pertinent to state here that, development can only thrive well in an atmosphere of peace where there is security of lives and property of the citizens. Libraries have contributed immensely to the return of peace in many nations including Nigeria, which in many cases re-opens the gates for the continuity of national development.

Omotayo (2005) observes that, in enlightened societies, in war situations, use of libraries increases as user's flock into libraries to find information to guide them. Information that can promote peace, unity, progress, peaceful co-existence, and harmonious relationship among all the communities must therefore be available in libraries. Librarians, hence, in promoting access to such information, act as agents of promotion of communal peace and reconciliation.

Information is a critical factor in national development, and the ability to use information as tools is considered a source of power (Bordbar, n.d). It is important to know that libraries deal with various information tools in order to acquire, process, organize, manage and disseminate information to its various clientele. The cooperation and assistance of librarians is a basis for any movement to gain development (Malekabadizadeh

et al, 2009).

1.1. Statement of the problem

In this digital information age, the relevance and importance of information in productivity and national development cannot be over-emphasized. Many nations have made great efforts that could culminate into national development but such efforts were proven abortive due to some important but neglected practices that are attached to the fact that ***the secret of productivity and development lies within the pages of publications***. The use of Libraries in many underdeveloped as well as developing nations has been neglected. Reading culture among the youths is fast dying. Government authorities seldom channel adequate national resources to the development of libraries, where people interact with sources of information and learning takes place. Programmes that could benefit the youths such as workshops, seminars and lectures, etc. towards developing their minds with creative ideas for innovations on productivity and national development have been neglected. The political gladiators and constituted authorities who should champion this course are busy with the pursuit of the little available national resources, allowing the youths, who are intelligent and fully endowed with natural ability and possessed innate potentials capable of initiating rapid economic growth and development, to waste away without being attended to.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives of this paper include the following:

- i. To examine the nature of libraries and youth productivity in national development;
- ii. To examine the influence of libraries on youth productivity and national development in Nigeria;
- iii. To proffer recommendations that would enhance the influence of libraries as instruments for youth productivity and national development in Nigeria.

1.3. Research questions

The paper is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the nature of libraries and youth productivity in national development?
- ii. How are libraries influencing youth productivity in national development in Nigeria?
- iii. What recommendations can be proffered to enhance the influence of libraries for youth productivity and national development in Nigeria?

1.4. Methodology

The paper adopted a conceptual research method. It employed secondary data obtained through library research and the internet, coupled with general observation. It reviewed different literature whose facts and opinions are in tandem with this research's focal point.

2.0. Conceptual clarifications

2.1. Library

Library may be defined as a carefully selected and organized collection of information materials in all forms including printed (hard copy) and electronic or digital (soft copy) formats, with the services of trained staff to provide and facilitate (interpret) such materials as are required to meet the information, research, educational and recreational needs of its users. It can also be defined as an organized collection of information resources made accessible to a defined community for reference, providing physical or digital materials in a physical or virtual space, or both (Allen, cited in Ahmed, 2014). This implies that we are in a modern society otherwise known as digital age, where libraries exist in traditional or manual, electronic or digital and/or hybrid (combining the two above) form/nature. There are different types of libraries. A library is organised for use and is maintained by a public body or government (Public library/National), an academic institution (Academic library), a corporate body or organization (Special library), a school (School library) or by a private individual (Private library).

Achitabwino (2006) avers that books and libraries form crucial repositories of knowledge and information accumulated over time, so that to have access to them is to enter an ongoing intellectual conversation within and between societies and generations, and partake in the immense heritage of human social taught. In this respect, the role of libraries as societal containers of information becomes indispensable.

The primary role of the library is to acquire, process, preserve, and disseminate recorded information to its target users. Its major target is literacy for all people. It is therefore the responsibility of the library to enlighten the youths and other members of the community it serves, by availing them of factual and relevant information that will guide their actions and enable them make good decision that will enhance their productivity and consequently, national development.

2.2. Information

Information is that which reduces uncertainty. It is the critical economic resource in today's world (Sabaratnam, 1997). Sokari (2006) posits that "information is necessary for people to be

liberated from the shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest, and political instability". In terms of productivity, information is the fifth factor of production, (Kandell & Scott, 2006).

Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2009) defines information as:

- i. knowledge: definite knowledge acquired or supplied about something or somebody;
- ii. gathered facts: the collected facts and data about a specific subject;
- iii. making facts known: the communication of facts and knowledge.

In her 'Curbing Youth Restiveness in Nigeria: The Role of Information and Libraries', Stella (2010) quotes various authors to explain the term information thus:

...According to Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2006) information is "structured

data that causes a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world and contribute to a reduction in the uncertainty of the state of the system". Social cohesion cannot be achieved without timely, accurate, and relevant information. Information has been likened to a stimulus that can condition a person to certain behaviour (Curras, 1987)

Information is a change agent, a reinforcer of ideas and opinions. It is the fertilizer of the mind. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that youths have access to information that will guide their actions. Information plays a vital role in wealth generation. Youths must be empowered with educational and economic information before they can be productive. They also need information on employment opportunities in all nations and communities. Access to entrepreneurial information will make youths inaccessible to those who want to recruit them for anti-social actions (Stella 2010).

2.3. Youths

The Federal Government of Nigeria in her National Youth Policy (2001) defined youths as people aged 18-35. They constitute about 40 per cent of the more than 150 million people of

Nigeria. Concise Oxford Dictionary [10th edition] defines youth as the period between childhood and adult age. It further describes youth as possessing the qualities of vigour, freshness, immaturity, etc. associated with being young. Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. Apart from being the owners and leaders of tomorrow with numerical superiority, youths have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials (Onyekpe, 2007).

National Youth Policy (2001:1) asserts that:

Youths are the foundation of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation finds her motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured.

It is clear that the importance of youths to a nation cannot be over-emphasized. They need to be given quality attention and be guided with the right, useful, relevant and timely information. A nation with such kind of information available and accessible for its youths has no fear for the future.

2.4. Productivity

Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2009) defines 'productivity' simply as "the ability to be productive". Online Business Dictionary (2015) defines 'productivity' as a measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, factory, system, etc. in converting inputs into useful outputs.

When economists refer to productivity at the broadest level they are referring to an economy's ability to convert inputs into outputs, which eventually culminate into national development. It is a relative concept with comparisons either being made across time or between different production units. These inputs are generally seen as land, labour, capital and entrepreneur, which are also referred to as factors of production. However, these four identified factors of production, with the current trend in world business today, are going obsolete and information is now coming in/or has already come

into the scene. Information is now being regarded as the fifth factor of production.

Kendall and Scott (1990) advocate that information should be included among the factors of production to become the fifth factor. They aver that information is worth, not only the fifth factor of production but also the major factor among factors of production in business. For the wealthiest of men today are those who are well equipped with the right kinds of information at the right time, which in turn enhances productivity.

2.5 National development

National development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation, which is best achieved through development planning (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). National development therefore is the expansion and growth of people in a defined territory or government. The first step to productivity and national development is the human mind, which is the main actor in producing and sustaining the physical change. National development is also the process of human civilization; hence, the human person must take the focus.

Any nation that is grappling with productivity and developmental issues is no doubt lacking the necessary information for development, especially among its teeming youths. Such an experience is merely a reflection of poor or lack of access to the relevant and timely information coupled with poor leadership. Thus, information is a '*sine quo non*' in ensuring national development.

3.0 Libraries and National Productivity

As information has now become, and is being acknowledged as the fifth and major factor of production, libraries today are viewed as highly lucrative institutions in production processes. They are instruments of information gathering or acquisition, processing, organizing, storage, and dissemination across organisations, industries, economic sectors and youths, for effective productivity.

For communities to realize their development choices, enhancement of their capacity to deliver and cope with societal changes; information accessibility is a critical necessity (Leautier, cited in Ola & Oseghale, 2011). Every sector of the economy needs quality information to realize an improved and better production output. Libraries are integral part of the educational development of school children and youths. The library is a fertile environment that accommodates and enables production processes that have to do with the human mind. Without the support of libraries,

schools cannot successfully achieve the goals of education, which are:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
- The acquisition of appropriate skills and social abilities and competences as tools for individuals to live and contribute to the development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Many cities across the world have taken the initiative to revamp their libraries by embracing technology to help patrons find resources more quickly. Libraries, in order to fully perform their mandate in this digital age, have been transformed from *Traditional* (manually operated) to *Digital* (Electronically operated), adopting all the features, abilities and capabilities of the Internet, otherwise known as the Information Super-highway, to digitally discharge its functions. This new shift in library services has helped expand its scope of operation on information services and has increased accessibility to a wider range of information that is packaged in diverse forms and formats, from across the world and is yielding optimum results to its patrons.

4.0 Information and its impact amongst the youths in the society

Nigerian youths as leaders of tomorrow need access to a wide range of information cutting across academic, business and job or working environment, which will help reposition them to take their rightful place in the society. Bill Gates, one of the richest men in the world today, co-founded 'Microsoft Company' at the age of 20 with his high school friend Paul Allen (Microsoft Encarta, 2009). The information that triggered or aroused Bill Gates' great potentials was made available to him when he was first introduced to computers and programming languages in 1968 while in school (grade eight). His early encounter with quality and relevant information made great impact on him. According to the article, the company's success made Gates one of the most influential figures in the computer industry and, eventually, one of the richest people in the world. As a youth, the impact of information in his creative mind has brought about a revolution in the world of business and in every sector of the economy, not only to the United States of America, but also to the world at large.

This practical example is in consonance with the assertion made by National Youth Policy (2001) as quoted above, where it said that, 'Youths are the foundation of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation'. Therefore, information is a stimulus to productivity, to self and national development.

5.0 The impact of libraries on youths' productivity in national development

The library is a repository of information where virtually every information management activity takes place. Hence, to talk on the library is to talk information. Information is a change agent, an instrument for reinforcing ideas and opinions. It is on this ground that Edward et al (2013) describe libraries as champions of youths. He further adds that libraries teach teens important skills. "The skills that teens pick up from teen advisory boards, voluntary opportunities, programmes, and jobs can prepare them for success in high school, college, and the workforce". It is helpful for youth to realize in time the bountiful opportunities libraries offer for self-development.

UNESCO (1984) asserts that individuals and communities must be provided with the knowledge and know-how that will awaken them to the projects open to them, and above all, enable them to act effectively themselves in improving productivity, hygiene, health and general living conditions and on exercising their civic rights.

Libraries as instruments for youth productivity and national development should therefore, double their efforts in making information available, especially to the young people, which would yield positive results. Such information, according to Onyekpe (2007), should be geared towards:

- "Creating the awareness that the future belongs to them and that it must not be destroyed by them;
- Sensitizing them to seek greater employment and educational opportunities as a means of redirecting their energy and ideas from anti-social activities to creative efforts;
- Sensitizing them to the fact that the future and its nature depends on the decisions and choices they make;
- Creating in them a sense of history, especially of the noble and heroic contributions of the youth in the past to the development of Nigeria, in comparison with the ignoble role of many youths today;

- Sensitizing them to embrace the rule of law and democratic ideals;
- Liberating them psychologically and mentally from the control of self-seeking business and political elites;
- Encouraging them to raise issues relating to unresolved problems of nation building and the problem of neglect of the youth in the development process at every forum.”

Similarly, Nigerian libraries can also promote youth productivity and national development through:

i. Provision of Business Information

Youth must be economically empowered through access to business and economic information. Access to entrepreneurial information will make youths inaccessible to those who want to recruit them for anti-social actions. If information is power, youths with keen interest in agriculture need to be empowered with the necessary information for greater productivity. Hence, libraries need to harness and display information on marketable crops, agricultural business, agricultural economies, diseases affecting crops, farming methods, irrigation, etc. Youths employed in industries for direct labour also need relevant information on prospects and challenges.

ii. Provision of Academic Information in Formal Learning Environments

Libraries are described as hub of academic institutions where formal learning takes place. Libraries of all kind (i.e. Academic, Public, School, National and Special) support the education of the youth. They provide Information to enable reading and learning, research work, doing assignments, undergraduate projects, post-graduate thesis, etc. This enables learning to take place and thereby change the behaviour, attitudes, and mindset of youths toward self-realization, self-development and national development.

iii. Provision of Career and Skills Acquisition Information and Environment

In addition to providing academic information in formal learning environment, Stella (2010) stresses that many libraries create friendly environments for acquiring skills and for career development. Libraries may go beyond collecting publications on various professions/disciplines to organizing seminars and workshops on career development. These programmes should aim at providing career guidance and counseling, which would help reduce the number of idle and frustrated youths who roam the streets aimlessly,

and who might, at the least provocation, resort to violence.

iv. Creating Job Employment Opportunity

Not only do Libraries serve information needs of the youths, libraries create opportunities for youth employment. A pace has been set by some Nigerian libraries including the University of Lagos Library and Federal University of Technology, Yola where Libraries employ students to undergo a work-study scheme in performing routine jobs such as packing and sorting of books, shelving books, pasting book pockets, and cleaning the libraries. Once engaged, these students perform their duties with zeal and enthusiasm. This initiative helps to instill the dignity of labour as well as alleviate the suffering of indigent students who could have dropped out of school (Ndagana and Ogunrombi, 2006). Youths who are gainfully employed are automatically made to fill some development gaps.

The preceding passage revealed that the central point where information could be effectively and easily harnessed, broadly accessed, and widely disseminated among the youths, is the library. If effectively patronised and supported by the government and other donor groups, as well as wealthy individuals, libraries would effectively promote high productivity among the youths, thereby resulting in socio-economic and national developments.

It is therefore pertinent to note that, no nation can develop without the needed information; and no information can be properly managed and effectively disseminated to the target users, without well-equipped libraries.

6.0. Recommendations

For libraries to effectively serve as instruments for youth productivity and national development in this information society, it is recommended that **Librarians:**

- Should present more current literature on world innovations and inventions, channeled towards youths’ development;
- Should advocate and encourage public libraries to increase the resources they devote to youth services, and widen access to federal and state resources for youth development;
- Should present information on different kinds of business ideologies and their development strategies;
- Should also collaborate with different firms, industries and other organizations to organize workshops, seminars and lectures for the youths on how to

become more productive, using the available resources on ground.

Also, **Federal and State Governments should:**

- Partner with multinationals to ensure the development of functional and well-equipped libraries in all educational institutions and communities;
- Enhance information flow among youths through seminars, workshops, and public lectures;
- Ensure equitable distribution of information and telecommunication facilities in both urban and rural areas;
- Integrate available sources of information to enhance accessibility and visibility of youth information needs;
- Increase opportunities for entrepreneurial development among youths;
- Give access to credit facilities and other support mechanisms to young investors;
- Increase allocations for youths' development and youth-related programmes;
- Ensure accessibility of information for skills acquisition, self-employment, job opportunities, and self-reliance among youths.

IFLA's Position

It is pertinent to also state IFLA's heartbeat on the way forward on issues of national development. IFLA (2013) urged policy makers and development practitioners to leverage the powerful existing resources (i.e. libraries) and ensure that any post 2015 development framework:

- Recognizes the role of access to information as a fundamental element supporting development;
- Acknowledges the role of libraries and librarians as agents of developments;
- Encourages United Nations member states support of the information frameworks underpinning developments - providing networks, information and human resources- such as libraries and other public interest bodies.

If the above recommendations are duly implemented, productivity will greatly improve among the youths and across different sectors of the economy and national development would stand as visible as the pyramid.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has treated issues relating to Libraries, Youth Productivity and National Development in Nigeria. Having reviewed relevant literature emanating from different authors on the topic, it is obvious that youths are the basic unit, the life cell and the foundation of a society; not only for their numerical superiority but because their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation.

The ability to be productive (**productivity**) is the main route to the growth and development of a nation (**national development**), which begins primarily with the development of the human mind, being fertilized by quality information. Development of the human person is directly proportional to the quality of information absorbed by the mind. Early exposure of youths to the body of information and knowledge, from as libraries, would fast-track national development.

It is therefore an established fact in this digital age, that national development is associated with economic progress and economic progress is associated with youth productivity. Youth productivity, in turn, is influenced by libraries, through contact with information. For the secret of development lies within the pages of information resources, and youths who have greater access to these information resources, read more. Youths are the future of every nation; and future development begins today by developing their young minds with quality information. Libraries are the greatest treasuries of quality information and symbols of the freedom of the mind.

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