

Library Services: A Missing Link in the Federal Government of Nigeria Policy on Vision 20:20:20

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Abstract

Purpose: To bring the notice of federal government and librarians in Nigeria that library services is in no way reflected in the vision 20:20:20 document and then give reasons why it should be included.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A literature based opinion paper which looked at the vision 20:20 documents. The paper looked at the previous policies which were never fully implemented, conditions necessary for the attainment of the vision, various committees set up and their objectives, scope and then the missing link. Recommendations on the necessity for the inclusion of library services in the vision were also highlighted.

Findings: The federal government did not consider the library service as important for inclusion in the vision probably because, there is no librarian in the various committees, poor attitude of the leadership of NLA and librarians in general on the issue, poor funding of libraries by government.

Practical Implications: The vision document is a policy of the federal government to join the industrialized world by the year 20:20. It is unfortunate that the Nigerian libraries were not included in the document. The NLA should rise to the challenge because no country can talk of industrialization without the libraries which provided resources that help in building manpower that carry out the industrialization process.

Originality/Value: Much of the discussions on the subtopics were culled from many prominent writers in the field of journalism professional librarians and economic planners.

Key words: Vision 20:20:20, policy document, and missing link.

Paper Type: View-point.

Introduction

Government all over the world from time to time articulates some policies to boast the economy or strengthen the process of governance. Some of these policies can take the nature of reforms such as political, tax, economy or a revolution such as agriculture and rolling plan. According to Ononogbo (200) "some of them can be short, medium or long-term depending on the nature and urgency".

Within the last thirty years, Nigeria has had a number of these policies, these include; operation feed the nation (1976 – 1979), the aim of this policy was to boost food production in the country; Green revolution (1979 – 1983). This programme was focused on agriculture; between (1984–1993), two policies were floated. These

were: Structural Adjustment Programme popularly known as (SAP) and Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI). The aim of SAP was to tighten our belt of expenditure so as to recover from economic woes caused by external loans. The later was aimed at developing the economy for an from the rural infrastructure; between 2003 – 2007, the government floated another programme named National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDDS). This was a medium term strategy aimed at solving Nigeria's long-term goals of poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Combating HIV/AIDS; malaria and other disease, child abuse and neglect etc, another policy was vision 2010. This policy was comprehensive and was aimed at

building a Nigeria full of hope in all aspect of human growth and development in including uninterrupted power supply.

In spite of all these robust policies by the past administration in the country, yet according to Sada (2009) “the declining welfare, social instability has undermined the development of this country for the past thirty years or more”. Successive regimes Sada continued spent large budget receipt when oil prices were low resulting in market instability and accumulation of debts. Some investments were made in 1980s but infrastructure and services were allowed to deteriorate; quality and standard of education had fallen and corruption was rampant. This outlook remained so according to him until of recent with the adoption of widespread reforms of (2003 – 2007) followed by the largest debts relief from Paris club in 2005 which provided physical space for economic growth. In 2005 Golman Sachs as posted by Ojeme E.O. (2009) predicted that Nigeria growth was a bit above 7.5%. In view of this, the then president Olusegwa Obasanjo projected that if Nigeria continues to grow at that rate, she would soon join the leading economies of the world by the year 2020. His projections did not materialize before his tenure in office ended in 2007. after the exist of president Obasanjo, he was succeeded by late president Yar’ Adua. In August 2008, he reiterated his administrations commitment to vision 2020 at a stakeholders summit in Abuja. According to him vision 20:20 represents a short to long-term response to the challenges inherent to his vision to transform the nation. This vision also in the words of Amuforo (2009) is “Nigeria’s quest to join the league of 20 industrialized nations by the year 2020”. According to the policy, the vision is a comprehensive frame work aimed at stimulating economic growth in Nigeria. Commenting on the vision Akin (2008) said “Nigeria is today at cross road; after numerous false starts and inability to analyze the much touted potentials of our country. It seems we are once again set on a journey to nowhere”.

Conditions Necessary for the Attainment of Vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria

To place Nigeria among the top leading economies of the world according to Sada (2009), the country would have to be a leading global economy competing with nations like United State of America, Japan and Germany

etc. Also certain bench marks used by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP); rise in personal income have to match that of Brazil or South Korea.

Continuing Sada Said:

- The country is expected to be technologically advanced with a vibrant educational system supported by modern standard libraries.
- The country must have adequate infrastructure and services to support economic growth as power generation distribution and supply; transport including railways, roads air and inland water ways.
- Communication that support the demands of the modern information communication technology.
- Have a modern technologically enabling agricultural sector that exploits agricultural resources and ensures food security and bring foreign exchange.
- The manufacturing sector must be globally competitive.
- The country must have good and effective governance through legislation and implementation of policies free from corrupt practice etc.
- Have efficient and self-sufficient health services and practices that ensures healthy nation.
- Also have an effective financial regulation that ensures transparency and accountability in managing public or private resources.

Nigeria Vision 2020

Considering what it would take Nigeria to join the industrialized world by 20:20. The Federal Government as documented by Wikipedia set up a machinery to address the desired objective through a working group that comprise of the following: The National Council on Vision 2020, National Steering committee (NSC), National Technical Working Group (NTWG), the Stakeholder Development Committee and the Economic Management team.

These committees would oversee the implementation of the vision.

Objectives of the Committee

- (a) To build solid foundation for the success of Nigeria Vision 20:20:20.
- (b) To prepare a strategy and use related documents that will form elements of the Nigeria's development plan to be achieved by 2008-2010.
- (c) The NSC and NTWG and stakeholders to develop implementation strategies from 2010-2015
- (d) To map out strategies that will project Nigeria to become one of the top 20 economies in the world 20:20.

Scope of Nigeria Vision 20:20

The working group submitted their report and in October 2009, the Federal Government gave a final approval and adoption of vision 20:20:20 programme. The birth of this new blue print provided a new stimulus for Nigeria's development. The outlines of the working group are as follows: the greater emphasis to be placed on; Agriculture and food security; Business environment and competitiveness; Corporate governance; Culture, Tourism and National-Re-Oriented; Education; Employment; Energy; Environment and sustainable development; Finance: foreign policy; Health Housing Human Development: Information and Communication Technology; Judiciary and the rule of Law; media and Communication; Mining and steel development; Political systems; small medium scale enterprises; sports development; urban and rural development; water and sanitation; these are the outline of the government vision 20:20: agenda. Details are contained in the main document.

The Missing Link

It is somehow embarrassing to remark that the working document did not in anywhere mention or emphasize the importance of libraries and knowledge in the vision. To substantiate this issue, speaking at the NLA Annual General Meeting at the NLA News and Resource Center Abuja (2009). Disso noted that from his research, "the consultants of the documents driven the vision quoted and used profusely knowledge but failed to acknowledge the importance of knowledge in the overall fulfillment of the vision." He suggested that this vision will go the way of Abacha's vision 2010 and Obasanjo's NEEDS because there was no

single structure relating to knowledge in the vision.

Also speaking at the meeting, Omekwu (2007) noted that he did a similar study of Obasanjo's NEEDS and concluded that information and knowledge were not given their rightful place. He called on the librarians to rise up and play advocacy roles in the current vision 20:20:20. He concluded "we cannot continue to stay aloof without punching holes in such documentations that will eventually not bring the country anywhere without knowledge".

Also speaking at the NLA annual General Meeting held at the NLA New and Resource Center Abuja (2009) Oladele said that the vision can be regarded as a motion "without moving". He likened the action of the federal Government to a book published by a consultant titled planning without facts. He challenged librarians all over the country to ask the Federal Government a simple question "what is their intention of library services"

One item in a communiqué issued at the proceeding of the 47th National Conference (AGN) of the Nigeria Library Association held at Ibadan on (July 2009) noted the strategic roles libraries have played in such developmental programs in developed countries and noted with dismay the non-recognition of libraries in the vision 20:20:20.

In support of the discussants at the meeting the writers are of the view that it is somehow embarrassing and unimaginable to believe that the Federal Government embark on a gigantic policy such as vision 20:20:20 without considering library services the center of any educational institution as one of the major area to be included. This cannot happen in the advanced world economies which we are planning to join.

Recommendation

Considering the Federal Government neglect of libraries in the vision 20:20: policy document, the writers hereby recommend strategies that would be taken to achieve the goals of the vision. In the first place, the government should know that libraries stand at the centre of any educational institution. In other words there is no way we can talk of education and technological developments without libraries from where all information is sourced. Even the hard copy of documents down loaded from internet is better preserved in the libraries.

Therefore the vision document should be revisited.

Secondly libraries especially academic libraries should be adequately funded to engage not only the level of staffing required to transit from their normal routine of the old to libraries of intensive research classification but should also provide staff appropriate skills, experiences, commitments and flexibility required to anticipate and meet the diverse information needs of University Community.

Good enough, the Federal Government according to the 8th March News broadcast of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).has released six billion naira to six Universities designated as centres of excellence. Though this is praise worthy, other universities and institutions of learning should also be remembered. The writers suggest that half of the money should be used in funding and building of libraries of excellence. The funding should help the libraries to acquire both current books and journals and virtual resources that are indispensable for the highest level of support for existing and now academic programmes at all levels of institutions, research and scholarship.

The same broadcasting station announced on the 16th March 2010 that the Federal Government intends to build electronic library (e-library) at Abuja. According to the source, this would cover one hundred and thirty-six secondary schools and some Universities. This is new and good development but, they should realize that Nigeria has thirty-six states and Abuja and thousands of institutions of learning both owned by the federal, state and private institutions. This is to say that they should at least cover half of the states and institutions of learning.

On the other hand, and in order to further draw the attention of the government to library development for the vision, Jackson (2001) said that libraries should devote maximum efforts to creating an information literate community of self-directed and lifelong learners and scholars who are skilled at identifying locating evaluating and utilizing the exploding world of information that will be available to them both inside and outside the libraries. In fact this is one the surest ways of projecting the profession to the wider environment.

Libraries especially academic libraries should also collaborate with other institutions as a cost effective means of further expanding resources

and services for other users. In addition they (academic libraries) should be organized and operate in a manner that will create and develop the full range and level of services traditionally provided by outstanding University library

Systems across the nation and the world at large.

Omekwu (2008) said academic libraries should see the services they provide in a global context. According to him “in practical and functional, terms globalization deals with the interplay of particularism and universalism”. This means that when institutionally generated, acquired or domesticated information is uploaded on the internet, it migrates into the Universal Domain; and when universally available and accessible information sources and services are downloaded and domesticated, they become locally available and accessible in such libraries and information centres. He added that academic and indeed all information service providers must perceive their work in the dual nature of the global environment. That duality he said operates in traditional paradigm is the familiar library terrain. In this, physical books and other information resources are acquired, stored, accessed and used in the library during service hours.

The physical model he continued is limited by time, space and number of resources or nature of services or what the library budget can afford. The technological paradigm on the other hand is not limited by time and space but rather seamless dynamic; interactive and integrative. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is the engine that creates this system he stressed. Internet he added is one of the ICT system that academic libraries could harness to the mainstream their services into global environment.

Finally, the federal government should consider these suggestions and put them in practice. The librarians should also wake up and project themselves because as the saying goes if you don't say here I am, nobody will say there you are. The then Nigeria Library Association (NLA) national president (Mrs.) Victoria Okojie in her closing remark at the conference at the NLA resource center promised to work with Dr. Disso in writing what she called a position paper to the federal government on the issues discussed on the missing link but, the writers are saying here that, this should not be a two man affair. The NLA should set up a committee of eminent

librarians who will collate memoranda from professional colleagues compile them and submit same to the federal government as a position paper from Nigeria librarians.

Conclusion

Nigeria's economic potentials is well recognized not only in Africa but beyond. It is the biggest economy in the West African sub-region. Given the country's considerable resource endowment and coastal location, there is potential for growth. Yet Nigeria has realized very little of these potentials. Previous efforts at planning and visioning were not sustained. The problems of economic stagnation, declining welfare and social instability have undermined development for most of the past thirty years.

In recent past, the country has been experiencing a growth turn around and conditions seem right for launching onto a part of sustained and rapid growth. This is why the federal government set up the National Technical Working Groups that came out with a document for vision 20:20. Unfortunately library services the vital engines for national growth were not included in the document.

The Federal Government should think twice because a country cannot talk of education and technological development without good and efficient library service. In recent past, libraries in Nigeria have undergone certain changes both in the quality of services and academic research. This is to say that libraries can no longer be sidelined and any government that has vision for development cannot succeed without the support of the libraries.

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