THE ROLE OF LIBRARY IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper established a relationship between the library, literacy, education and national development. It touched on the way(s) the library influenced students from primary school to the tertiary level not leaving out the informal education such as adult literacy. The presentation gave a typical breakdown of the types of libraries and their functions in bringing about educational development amongst the teeming rural and city folks in our attempts at national growth and development.

It also discussed the library as a pre-requisite for education for sustainable development at all levels of education. The paper emphasized the role of libraries through extension services and Audio-visual aids, story hours, lectures, book exhibitions, pictures, newsreels, films, etc, for mass education. It also established that the library strengthens collaborative research amongst business, government and educational communities in the society and contribute to all life-long learning opportunities of all Nigerians.

As a way forward, the paper recommended that for education for all (EFA) to be a reality in Nigeria, government and policy makers in education should look beyond recruitment of teachers and the such only but ensure that libraries are established alongside these education for all projects and that all the libraries should be stocked with materials that are of immense contribution to the development of minds of the community and people in the environment which the libraries serve, which will in turn affect the country in general.
INTRODUCTION:

Illiteracy among Nigerians, with its social and economic implications, has become a growing concern in recent times. And national awareness of problems associated with limited literacy skills has led to legislation, beginning at the Federal level to fund programmes such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE). Essentially, libraries are viewed as an important component of this massive educational effort of the Federal Government without the library no meaningful academic efforts can be carried out. Generally, literacy is considered to be the ability to read, write, speak, and compute at a certain level. Functional literacy involves skills needed to cope at an adult level in everyday situations, such as reading a newspaper or a novel. The importance of the library in educational development cannot be over-estimated. Akinpelu (1994) described books as, “the shrines where the saint is believed to be, and having built an ark to save learning from the deluge, deserve in propriety any new instrument or engine whereby learning should be advanced”.

In this paper therefore, efforts would be made to discuss the institutional roles of libraries in advancing the frontiers of literacy and education development in the society. The paper would examine the essentials and close bearing of the library upon the advancement of education and learning in Nigeria.

Definitions

For a better understanding of this paper, it is necessary to define what a library is;
At the elementary stage library is referred to as:

(i) a collection of literacy documents or record kept for reference or borrowing
(ii) a depository house built to contain books and other materials for reading and studying
(iii) a collection of standard programmes and subroutines that are stored and available for immediate use.
(iv) A building that houses a collection of books and other materials.

Advanced definitions of Library however are as follows:

(i) Islam (2004) described it as a learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources.

(ii) Omojuwa (1993) described the library as an enabling factor to obtain spiritual, inspirational, and recreational activities through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society’s wealth and accumulated knowledge.

(iii) Another definition of Library according to Islam (2004) is an instrument of self education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreation, and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one’s mental vision, and dignifies his habit behaviour, character, taste, attitude, conduct, and outlook on life.
(iv) The online Dictionary, Thesaurus and Encyclopedia described the library as a place in which literary and artistic materials, such as books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, prints, records, and tapes, are kept for reading, reference, or lending. In a digital sense, a library may be more than a building that houses a collection of books and other materials as the Internet has opened up an avalanche of online and electronic resources for accessing documents on various fields of interest.

(v) Online Glossary defined digital library as a collection of texts, images, etc, encoded so as to be stored, retrieved, and read by computer. Furthermore, a digital library is a collection of documents in organized electronic form, available on the Internet or on CD ROM disks. It is the traditional/conventional physical library that provides a basis for the digital library. The Association of Research libraries (ASL) in a publication on 23 October, 1995, described digital collections as unlimited access to document surrogates: they extend to digital artifacts that cannot be represented or distributed in printed formats. Another further development from the digital library is the advent of Virtual Library (VL).

(vi) A web definition for virtual library is that which exists solely in electronic from or on paper. The building blocks required for such a library may not exist, and the chemical steps for such a library may not have been tested. But the materials needed like journals are barred to a location, which can be decoded through passwords.

**Types of Library**

There are different types of libraries, viz:
(a) Academic library
(b) Public Libraries,
(c) Special library
(d) Virtual Library, all of which contribute to education and educational development in various different ways.

Before accounting the role of the library in educational development abruptly, it may be pertinent here to recall the functions of these various kinds of institutions which are not often self-explanatory to the general public at which my present endeavour is primarily aimed, so that the various parts played by them in the furtherance of education can be distinctly and succinctly gleaned.

(a) **Academic Libraries**

They comprise of school libraries at the primary and secondary levels, College libraries, and University libraries whose prime objective is to meet the academic needs of the particular institution for which it is created to serve. The purpose of a University Library differs, in varying degree, from that of a school or college library in that the former adheres extensive and particular emphasis to research projects apart from the curricular needs of the institution. Besides aiding in the studies of children and assisting the teachers in their teaching and periodic research, a school library is primarily concerned to pro-create an urge for reading habit amongst the children who here get a first hand-knowledge to use the library resources most effectively in their future career. This institution serves to build up a strong mental base and character of children.

(b) **Public Library**
This on the other hand is most often called “peoples’ University”, in a democratic society operated for the people by the people that conserves and organizes human knowledge in order to place if freely in the service of the community without any distinction of occupation, creed, class, religion, or ethnicity. It is a university of the people since it is maintained and financed by the people of the community who freely throng in this institution and acquire knowledge that they need in their day to day life. The scope or command of a public library that meets specific but general requirements of the public thus remains quite broader in its vision. It offers from the other types of libraries in that by offering opportunities of informal self-education it inculcates reading habit amongst all types of general readers and, as a result, maintains a sizeable collection of newspapers, light literature, i.e., fictions, novels, story books, e.t.c., for recreational studies, and a children’s corner equipped with juvenile literature. Among its broad based functions to perform in educating the general public as well as the children, the following ones can be quoted:

(a) It facilitates informal self-education of all people in the community;

(b) Enriches and further develops the subject on which individuals are undertaking formal education;

(c) Meets the informational needs of all;

(d) Creates and further develops civic sense and habits of the citizens;

(e) Supports educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organizations;
(f) Encourage wholesome recreation and constructive use of leisure time.

(g) Provides children, young people, men and women opportunity to:

   (i) educate themselves continuously,

   (ii) keep abreast of progress in all fields of knowledge, and

   (iii) maintain freedom of expression and constructively provides a critical attitude to all public issues and world affairs.

(c) **Special Library**

A special library, which is concerned with literature of particular subject or group of subjects, in an institution which is created to serve the needs of some working organization, either a company, a research association or a government department. It is often established to save time which the staff, either executive or research, would otherwise employ searching for information.

Paul Wasserman has rightly asserted that the “special libraries have never had subtle or indirect aims; unlike public or college libraries, their mandate is almost always clearer and sharper, more realistic, even perhaps more attainable in the pragmatic sense of the term, than those of other types of libraries. Essentially, the special library has been historically, and remains today, an integral, functioning unit of the organization in which it is found, dedicated to the proposition that it exists only to offer the information which the organization needs in order to build, prosper, advance, and achieve its ultimate ends”. At a
glance a special library which is specialized in a particular field of knowledge has a distinguishing mandate of which are:

(a) periodical literature is of prime importance and forms the major part of the collection (library);

(b) reports, standards, specification form a considerable quantity;

(c) It files information rather than materials which calls for introduction of special techniques (mechanical indexing, information retrieval system, etc) for organizations;

(d) Information here are up-to-date more than the text books, periodical literature or published reports;

(e) It ensures quickest dissemination of information (SDI).

**The need for Library Services:**

The history of the library in Nigeria is not done without mentioning the first library called “town Library” which according to Oyegade, Nassarawa and Mokogwe (2003) was founded in 1879. Its objectives, which included, the establishment of books and materials to lend to the public for their consumption, are not far fetched from what they were during the early Christian missionary efforts in Nigeria and what obtains at the moment. The Libraries create literacy among the people, give public lectures. Library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. According to Metzger, (1991), Library services are needed to enable the individual develop full potentials and widening the horizons of perception, interests and skills. Other needs for library services include; public enlightenment or rights in the society, understanding social values and expected conduct in public life; assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of the society, to cultivate
and maintain reading culture and promotion of good literatures. Onshwakpor, J. E. summed up the need for library services from the perspective of adult education when he observed that, “If adult education is to have a greater share in the molding and building of a happier individual and a better society, the providers of adult education must go beyond their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of adult learners.

**The Role of Libraries in Educational Development**

Education has been defined as a complex of social processes of acquiring knowledge and experience, formally or otherwise. Ogunsheye (1981) states that it involves the total apparatus used for the development of the individual.

The library enables the individual to obtain spiritual, inspirational, and recreational activity through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society’s wealth and accumulated knowledge (Omojuwa 1993). The library can be seen as an extension of education.

Library services are needed to keep the skills that have been acquired through literacy classes alive by the provision of good literature. If education is to have a greater share in the moulding and building of a happier individual and a better society, the providers of education must go further than their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of adult learners.

Organizing a library to aid education calls for an atmosphere of friendliness and a useful collection. Education facilitators should involve librarians in planning education programmes and learners should be given library instruction.
'Education' and 'Library' are two inseparable indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. One cannot be separated from the other. None of them is an end in itself; rather both of them together are a means to an ultimate end. One dies as soon as the other perishes. One survives as long as the other exists. This inter-relation, co-existence, if you like, this dependence of one upon the other have been coming down from the birth of human civilization to the posterity through a process of evolution in accord with varied needs, changes, and circumstances of various stages of human life. From the earlier definitions, education cannot exist alone in the absence of library and library has no meaning if it cannot impart education. A Good well equipped library is a sine qua non for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual advancement and elevation of the people of a community. It is an indispensable element of the absolute well being of the citizens and that of the nation at large. People acquire education through certain institutions, schools, agencies, welfare bodies, museums and organizations, and the library is the most outstanding of such institutions. A school, a club, and enterprise of a society can never alone impart education; each of them is dependant upon a library – a centre of wholesome education, and the quencher of thirst for concrete, fathomless, ultimate knowledge! The concept of education for sustainable development and its relationship with Education for All (EFA) is a new vision of sustainable development programme by UNESCO. In December 2002, resolution 57/254 on the United Nations Decade of Education for sustainable Development (2005-2014) was adopted by the UN General Assembly and UNESCO was designated lead agency for the promotion of the Decade.
Indeed, the establishment of the concept on education for sustainable development and its relationship with Education for All (EFA) the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) clearly illustrate that quality education, a goal of the library, is a prerequisite for education for sustainable development at all levels and in all modalities of education. The Educational Policies and plans of UNESCO in the role of education and its development, poverty reduction, the promotion of universal human values and tolerance, and the challenges of new ICTs (library).

A Web definition for Education Development is the process of improving the effectiveness of educational provision through an ongoing review of relevant factors at all levels from teaching techniques and materials to institutional structures and policies, and the provision of mechanisms for progressive change.

**Conclusion**

It is evident from the aforementioned that the different types of libraries play a significant role in educating the citizenry of a nation. The utility of a library in educational development can at once be felt and generalized particularly when we look into the educational revival programmes such as the U.B.E. The inability of parents to purchase valuable books for their children can be checked with establishment of libraries – school libraries for primary and secondary education to wage a “war” or campaign this great lack for which education has remained handicapped and limited. Apart from this, the public libraries render a yeoman service in the adult education through extension services and audio-visual aids, viz; story hours, lectures, book exhibitions, displays, book weeks, and motion pictures, newsreels, film
strips, music stores, phonorecords, and the like. These aid mass education libraries also strengthen communication and collaboration between and among the research, business, government and educational communities in the society and contribute to the life long learning opportunities of all Nigerians. Undoubtedly, the goals of the library are to promote literacy, provide services, materials, and opportunities for citizens to become a part of the educational system and to give support to government educational policies and programmes such as the U.B.E. The establishment of more schools, training of teachers and curricula improvements, although, worthy efforts, may not just be all without a commensurate programme to establish and upgrade libraries which are not merely conservers of past events, experiences and knowledge, but have essential roles and close bearing on advancement of education and nationhood.
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