

# REFOCUSING LIBRARY EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The ever-increasing pressure for information has necessitated the need for library education in our schools- National Development has been a major national objective of all countries. It is in this light that this paper leads to refocus on the role of library education as a factor in national development in Nigeria. It started with an introduction and description of a library, examined briefly the history of library education, defined the concept, refocusing and national development, then the role of library education strategies for resource development, hindrances and finally conclusion / possible solutions were enacted.

The unquenchable desire for national development, was one of the reasons that motivated and encouraged the founding fathers of our country to energetically pursue our national independence, which was later achieved in 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. With this dream, there has been a serious hope for a quick transformation of the country into a well-developed nation, which could cater for her citizens. However, with these aspirations and assumptions there are still great controversy as to the extent these dreams have been achieved.

The perceived failure in national development had sober reflections on what might have been wrong with our circumstances that impeded national development. This is done, with a view to refocusing on areas of input needed to achieve national development. There are particular roles of government agencies that should be examined to achieve this.

This paper particularly looks into how we can have a refocus on library education as an instrumental factor in national development.

## **What is a Library?**

Libraries as an agency of information has been so designed to conserve knowledge; preserve the cultural heritage; support education; research and serves as a place for recreation. This is why Iya (2004), in her write-up, sees the library as a place where materials are collected, organized, preserved and provide immediate access to the content of the information sources so acquired to library users. It is then important that users should be educated on how this information can be easily located in the library. Besides, the processes of sighting, locating, retrieving, processing and preserving information are undergoing changes because of the dynamic nature of the world, besides, dynamism is the spice of development.

## **Brief History of Library Education**

Library schools in Nigeria were established as one of the realities of the situation in the early years of library education in Nigeria. Most library schools were established as a continual empirical search for the relevant and appropriate form of education. It has gradually progressed from the apprenticeship method of professional certificate by the British Library Association during the colonial period, to a formal system with local relevance which shows that most library schools must consider both past and present practices of library activities. Aguolu (1985), cited in Iya (2004), emphasized that in designing the curriculum in library education, the library schools must consider the present, and future practices and functions of libraries. In addition, she listed the basic responsibilities of library schools thus:

The production of qualified librarians,  
A center of research for libraries and information science and as the professions "think-tank".  
Provision of further education for libraries.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), foresaw the need for national development and societal changes and needs, which have necessitated period of re-evaluation and restructuring of the existence of professional programmes in Nigerian library schools. To this, it is opined that their curricula - must be based upon a clear perception of the professional staff needs, a degree of subject knowledge, competence and skills.

### **Definition of concepts**

#### **Refocusing as a concept of Education**

In ordinary sense, to refocus simply means to readjust so as to get a fixed point. It also means to rebuilt, revamp, or restore to normal condition Ojerinde (1997). As an educational concept and the context of this conference, refocusing means to re-evaluate and review the educational system with a view to enhancing the attainment of set goals for national development.

To have a refocus of an educational system, it means that the curriculum must be considered first. Because in the formal educational process, the curriculum occupies a unique position.

This is why we see curriculum as the totality of "learning experiences and opportunities planned for the learner under the guidance of the school. Ojerinde (1997), says that curriculum derives much of its content from those cherished elements of the culture, which must be transmitted. It can be said that culture, curriculum and education are interrelated and mutually interdependent.

It is the view of this paper to re-emphasize that refocusing of education for national development is now new in the history of education in this country. The concept means to review education in line with the emerging socio-economic and political changes of a nation or a given society.

It can also be referred to as the process of overhauling an educational system with special emphasis on the academic, physical and personnel perspectives.

#### **National development**

The concept of developments implies the process by which substance grows larger, fuller and more organized.

Development in human society comprises of the process that are channeled towards man's physical, political, economic and social environment Madamidola (1997). On the other hand, viewed it as a process of change in a progressive direction towards a better social well being for the members of the society.

National development therefore, can be defined as the growth of a nation in all aspects of man's life. This comprises all components of national power, economic, educational, political and socio-cultural, for the accomplishment of higher national purposes or needs. Nwana (1995), viewed national development as the harnessing of available resources by a people for the realization of their major objectives, solving their major articulated problems without deliberately creating new problem situations. For Nigeria, the national objectives clearly articulated in the second national development plan have provided the criteria against which development effort can be assessed and evaluated. Since education and development is the focus of this paper, these objectives of the NPE (2004), can be well stated again:

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

It is also believed that in Nigeria philosophy of education, "Education is the instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development and the interactions of persons and ideas are all aspects of education NPE (2004).

Every developed nation is said to be one, which clearly articulates its national objectives and has achieved all or most of them within a reasonable time frame. It is also seen as a progressive country, while the undeveloped nation is one that has articulated its national objectives but achieved only a few of them and has put in place strategies and machineries for achieving them and mustering the will to achieve them.

It is therefore important that these national objectives should be outlined in order to shade more light on how the educational aims and objectives outlined in the national policy on education should work in line to achieve the following development, in the nation:

- 1) The inculcation of national consciousness and unity.
- 2) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- 3) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- 4) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

The ever-increasing pressure on library use because of information needs of the users, has really resulted to expansion of demand in both volume and varieties of library services, and increase in number of library users. These users are information thirsty for their human development as skilled workers, which will in turn help develop the society. It is in this light that library education becomes necessary for users and professionals. However, the library is not only an information center but also a center per excellence upon which all academic activities revolve. No wonder the national policy on education (1981) and the NCB guideline (1994), identified the library as important aspect of educational services, established to help national development through supporting the teaching learning and research activities in the parent institution. Nevertheless, these objectives and that of the national objectives can also be achieved through systematic acquisition, storage, organization and dissemination of information in all fields, pertinent to the goal of the institution. Ekwueme (2005), examined the following as NCCE guideline:

- Ensures that its collection of any library material is designed to meet the objectives and information requirement of the institution;
- Ensures that the resources and facilities provided are maximally used through proper organization and dissemination;
- Evaluate from time to time the success of the library as meeting the library and information needs of the users.

The aforementioned objectives can best be achieved in relation to the national development through library education or studying the use of library, which will in turn help the students have knowledge on how to gather information. This is why libraries all over the world should anticipate to move with time upon the realization of the importance of information, because for a country to have her socio-economic and political rehabilitation, it has to deal with human development as skilled workers and it is obvious that no skill comes into existence without knowledge and information.

If a person is not properly informed, he / she will be deformed. This is why the saying that "Knowledge is power" permeates the air. So for any successful development in a nation, information plays a vital role or important part, since it has assumed the central role in the emerging economic and social order of the society.

The globalization of the economy resulted to parallel process of information globalization in which "information superhighways" are being built to communicate with and supply information required. Hardly, can any nation now develop without adequately organizing its information infrastructure.

Throughout history, information gotten from information channels like the libraries have helped to shape the destinies of nations and mankind as a whole, such nations and individuals have a competitive edge over their rivals.

Libraries if adequately utilized will positively contribute to the development of any nation in the following ways:

- It helps in mental and intellectual development
- Helps individuals to become experts in their profession.
- Gives users information on varieties of employment opportunities that can help in national development.

Helps in a long-range development of skilled manpower requirement of the economy. Helps to plan education priorities and with the information from the libraries, users will have opportunities of a whole range of investment to enhance the resource development of the nation-

### **Strategies for Resource Development**

There are three strategies for resource development, and they are:

**Building of incentives for a Better Productivity:** Here people should be encouraged in such productive activities, which are needed to accelerate the process of economic development of the nation.

**Training of Personnel:** The need to train and retrain or upgrade such productive activities with enough and accurate information needed to accelerate the process of economic development of any nation.

**Development of Formal Education:** There should be the building of a system of formal education, where all knowledge of (the necessary skills to build a developed nation can be acquired.

### **Hindrances to the Roles of Libraries in [National Development**

National Development has eluded Nigeria over the years since independence. This shows that the

agencies and individuals responsible have not played their expected roles well. Reasons are mainly because of some hindrances, among them are:

### **Lack of Sufficient Funding of Libraries**

This problem has been a major issue of concern to libraries because the libraries can't adequately discharge their responsibilities of acquiring the necessary materials for study, teaching and research. This problem still persists despite the NCCE (1994), guidelines for running libraries in academic institute, that libraries shall be allocated minimum often per cent (10%) of the institutes'-yearly recurrent expenditure. However, most institutions have not really met this minimum, requirement of funding. Therefore, this inadequate funding makes it almost impossible for academic libraries to meet the standard as contained in the guidelines for running libraries.

Another hindrance is the slow pace or absence of the use of new information technologies in; the delivery of information services. This is because most libraries still use the conservation method of service.

To this, libraries should either embrace the new technology or risk being inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant in the new dispensation of quest for fast delivery of information required,

### **Recommendation**

- Need for an upward review of adequate funding by government or voluntary organizations, etc.
- The need to create awareness for the use of these new technologies in libraries, so that they can be efficient, effective and relevant in the new dispensation of quest for fast delivery of information required.
- There should be a policy on Information Technology application in libraries. This will enhance the pace for the use of these technologies in our libraries.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, library education in schools have significant role to play in the national development of Nigerians. Giving adequate support to the realization of library objectives, which includes the provision, and making available to clients materials for study, teaching and research should re foe us these roles library education play. The extent libraries survive in schools is the extent to which it contributes to the efforts of building a nation.

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