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Administrative Concerns in the Implementation of Sustainable Library Service for National Development

By

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Abstract

This paper examined the administrative concerns in the implementation of sustainable library services for national development in Nigeria. As an emerging issue, the paper critically examined the library administrator's roles in the implementation of library services to users towards the development of the individual and the country at large. The paper however concluded that the library administrator should be professionally positioned for the vital role in the provision, management and maintenance of library services in Nigerian libraries.

The importance of library and library services in the quality of education, the development of the individual and the society at large can not be understated. To this end, Fadero (2001) argued that there was apparently no further need to debate the importance of libraries in any national system of education because the issue seems to have been over flogged by experts in both librarianship and educational planning. The author also asserted that effective teaching requires support of librarians and well-

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equipped libraries and that meaningful teaching and learning demand adequate provision of library facilities and (services).

Okoro and Tinuoye (2009) in their study stated that library services include storage and retrieval of current information, provision of internet facilities, cataloguing, convivial learning environment as well as guidance services amongst others. They also concluded that library service is thus a major component in any academic institution for knowledge empowerment. Furthermore, the Actuarial Profession (2012) gave the various services that could be obtained from a library to include: Borrowing of books, provision of online resources, information dissemination, literature searches and business services.

In another development, Dublin City Council (2012) also added that library services include the provision of business information, where reference services are provided; provision of computers and internet access; learning with library through the e-library; publications; reference and information and mobile library services among other things. Local Government Group (2011), also posited that libraries can provide services that can contribute to a wide range of better outcomes for communities, from children, young people to older people, health and wellbeing and stronger communities to access education, skills and employment.

In the light of these wonderful activities that libraries can provide, towards sustainable national development in Nigeria, it becomes very pertinent to state that the administrator's role in the library is absolutely an inevitable one.

The Administrator in Library Services Development

An administrator is the head of an institution or organization. According to Ozigi (1977) in Akpan (2005), the organization, administration, instruction, spirit and purpose of a school (and organization such as the library) reflects, to a large extent the personality of the administrator. Arguably therefore, the image of the organization is projected by the head. In congruence, Akpan (1995) asserted that the administrator performs the managerial roles within the policy limits of the system. He provides the leadership, and supervises activities. The author also posited that the administrator operates and maintains materials and facilities for the personnel, development of professional success and good morale of staff within the organization.

Bessong and Ekpo (2005) then up-held that the administrator can also be likened to a chief public relations officer of his/her organization. He maintains public relations with the library and its patrons and communities. The authors further argued that it is of great importance therefore, that the administrator is adequately prepared for his career as a library administrator. He should have sound organizational ability,

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should be a scholar in his own right and possess professional knowledge. He must be resourceful and have breadth of vision.

Furthermore, the Library Student Journal (2011), stated that a library like any other organization, requires an administrator, but to find a new way forward requires much more than just efficient management or responsible caretaking. It requires leadership (administration). Leaders (administrators) do much more than just make sure the trains run on time, they present their organizations with a vision of what they can be. The journal concluded that as Libraries struggle to decide what form it is best to take in order to meet a host of new information needs and other library services provisions, the library administrator must struggle to find the best way to lead a changing profession. In the face of such always sweeping and sometimes threatening change, often the Knee-Jerk reaction to revert to old and similar ways can be tempting.

As a follow up, Shaughnessy (1979) asserted that the effective library administrator needs to be cognizant of the environmental forces which affect all “open systems, one of which is the library. But as libraries segment themselves in an attempt to be more responsive to change, attention must also be given to the design of coordinative devices to maintain organizational integrity in terms of provision of Library Services.

Library Services and National Development

Education is a key factor in the concept of development and libraries through their services are very important essential tools for attaining national objectives of human resource and economic development (Okuy, 2012). Regardless of the notable negative impact of under funding of educational institutions in Nigeria the libraries remain the core and most vital equipment of any recognized educational institution. This is because, as a resource, library services occupy a central and primary place serving the function of teaching, learning and research in the creation of new knowledge, promotion of current information in professional practice and transmission to posterity of the learning and culture of the present and past age (Lawal, 2004).

In the light of the foregoing, it is pertinent to reiterate the obvious fact that for the purpose of the pursuance of the goals, of the Nigerian government in its vision 2020, the library must be brought to the front burner so that its services can be harnessed to leap frog Nigeria to the desired goal (Okuy, 2012).

As Seymour (1980) observed, responsive library service is not simply a product of the Dewey decimal system but it also requires intelligent planning, ability to learn from experiences and sensitivity to human needs and allow for users’ maximum benefits from the services provided. Based on this stance, Saliu (2012) argued that the

library through their services could ensure the realization of national development in Nigeria through:

1. Provision of information for planning
2. Provision of educational information and facilities
3. Provision of political information
4. Undertaking Researches
5. Provision of economic documents
6. Organization of enrichment programmes.

Adio and Olasina (2012) also construe that library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. Library services are needed to enable the individual develop full potentials and to widen his horizons of perception, interests and skills (Metzer, 1991). Adio and Olasina also argued that other needs for library services include:

1. Public enlightenment on rights in the society;
2. Understanding social values and expected conduct in public life;
3. Assisting to adjust to existing social, political spiritual and economic activities of the society;
4. To cultivate and maintain reading culture and promotion of good literatures.

As Penna (1967) included, if national and universities libraries are the barometer of a country's erudition, libraries are the barometer of its general culture. Erudition and culture are valuable sources of national wealth. For the education and training of the individual is considered in every development plan and every educational plan as being one of the essential means of stimulating economic and social development. For a people to be erudite and cultivated one of the things required is an effective educational system: an effective educational system requires the systematic use of reading; reading requires books and, if they are to be at the disposal of the whole population, libraries are needed; Without libraries there can be no good primary school, no effective secondary school, no effective universities, nor can the life-long integrated education of adults be encouraged.

Conclusion

Library services are essential requirements for the development of any nation such as Nigeria. To this end, the provision of these library services to Nigerians is a positive and welcomed step towards its development. The library administrator therefore becomes the vital factor to harness the services towards the desired goal of national development. The paper concludes that the administrator should be professionally positioned in this direction as a library administrator.

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The Way Forward in Nigeria

Based on the conceptual findings of this paper, the following are suggested way forward by the authors in line with Gwang (2011)

- a. Proactive approaches
- b. Diagnosis and customization
- c. Research into professional education and practice
- d. Visibility to library professionals
- e. Improved planning.

Proactive Approaches

The strategies for meeting the current challenges to providing library services to most Nigerians begin with the library professional and administrators themselves. These professionals must vigorously adapt proactive approaches to library and information provisions. It is their responsibility to correct the prevailing unhealthy state of library practice and services which are predominantly passive or reactive.

Diagnosis and Customization

Library administrators like physicians or any other professionals, must diagnose the information needs, plan and then implement the service which meets these needs. They should evaluate performance periodically in the light of the needs in order to take any necessary corrective measures and ensure the needs of the user groups are being met adequately by the services rendered.

Research into Professional Education and Practice

There is need for continuous research into various aspects of professional practice in order to develop a formidable theoretical knowledge base for the profession. These areas include: collection development, cataloguing and classification, reference services, user education and the value of the research done based upon experienced evidence of its use toward improving practice.

Visibility of Library Professional Administrator

There is relative obscurity, and consequent obvious lack of prioritization of library services in the country. This situation calls for urgent measures to enhance the visibility of library professional administrator's services further professional, in the library. Such measure include: active participation of professional administrator's to promote the activities of library in media both of the local and international level.

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