

COMMUNITY ROLES IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: THE CASE OF LIBRARIES, COMPUTER/INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The paper discusses the roles of communities in libraries/ICT. It began with introduction when key concepts of community, computers, libraries, ICT were defined. The paper then discusses reasons for community participation in ICT, and the ways the community should participate in Libraries and ICT.

Introduction

The topic of this presentation is: Community Roles in Nigerian Education System: A Case Study of Libraries, Computer/Information and Communication Technology. The topic is relevant at this point in time because the 21st century society depends mainly on them. According to Heathcote (2000), the roles of these modern inventions could easily be observed in business and commerce, in manufacturing, in education, in communication, internet business, health and safety.

Despite the above mentioned importance of these modern inventions to the community, the technologies are not fully utilized in Nigeria as at present, because the government authorities seem not to fully appreciate their importance or are not ready to commit resources to make them readily available. The non-governmental organizations are also not forthcoming in the provision of these facilities.

In the field of provision of schools and health institutions, community and Church organizations' participation was commendable in Nigeria. For example, in Southern Nigeria according to Fafunwa (1998) between 1842 and 1914, there was intensive efforts of the Christian missionaries in the field of education and health institutions. Colonial government was not very serious in funding schools. Infact, up to 1882, the colonial government left the business of education entirely to the missionaries. It was only after 1882 that the colonial authorities started to involve herself in educational activities.

In Northern part of the country, education of the Muslim type was entirely through community efforts. Fafunwa (1998) established the existence of 25,000 Qur'anic schools with a total population of 328624 pupils at the time of British conquest of the area. Also, more recently, Galadanchi (2006), counted 14,000

Qur'anic schools with a population 1,100,000.00 pupils and 4,000 Islamiyya schools with a population of 1,000,000.00 in Kano state alone.

The history of community libraries in Nigeria is pathetic. Even public libraries are so few if one compares it with the size of Nigeria and her population. Libraries which are not adequately equipped are mainly located in the universities and other tertiary educational institutions. The writer as at now (2009) has not come across any literature on the existence of community libraries. There were however, examples of some few private libraries. For example, the library collection of Henry Carr, the collection of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Namdi Azikiwe Library at Nsukka which was partially vandalized during the civil war are some of them. In the Muslim northern Nigeria, private libraries existed even before colonial rule. The Jihad leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate were great scholars, writers and book collectors. Sheikh Uthman Danfodio, his bother Abdullahi Fodio and his son Muhammad Bello owned rich private libraries (last, 2009). In the q970's Paden (1973) found out that the Late Malam Aminu Kano, Malam Abubakar Atiku, malam Ahmad b Ali, Muhammad dan'Amu, Umaru Falke Faruk, malam Nasiru Kabara and others had huge collection of books in their private libraries. The problem is that private libraries are mainly established for the exclusive use of their owners and selected disciplines only.

The modern inventions of computer, information and communication technology are only available in business,

private and public institutions. The contribution of community is minimal. The objective of the essay is to discuss how the community could play roles in the provision of these necessary facilities.

Definitions of Key Concepts

- i. **Community:** A community could be viewed in terms of all the people or group of people living within a specific geographical area such as a village, a town, a city, a neighbourhood or even a whole state or nation. People who live in a community are closely knit and organized. These togetherness among them spell out a common feeling or community i.e. oneness.
- ii. **Computers:** Curtin, (1998), defined computers as devices that can store and process data based on a set instructions. The instructions called programmes are stored in computers when in use so the can be executed automatically.
- iii. **Libraries:** Libraries according to Aguolus (2002), are social institutions founded to conserve knowledge, preserve the culture of the society, provide information, assist education and research and provide environment for re-creation.
- iv. **Information:** is the act of informing or the condition of being informed, the communication of knowledge and the knowledge derived from study, experience or instructions (Dennis, 1998).

- v. **Technology:** is the application of science, for industrial or commercial objectives.
- vi. **Information Technology:** is creating, gathering, processing, storage and delivery of information and the processes and the devices that make all this possible. This term, according to Aina (2004) combines computer and telecommunications Technology (ICT). It is concerned with the technology used in handling, acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating information.

The Roles of Community in Libraries, Information and Communications Technology

Our libraries which supposed to be centres of excellence in stoking irrelevant materials. Even some University libraries no longer systematically buy the latest works (Last, 2009). This means that scholars, students and general public, if they have to be up to date, have to have collections of their own. Community could assist or take part in providing materials for the libraries. In which way or ways does the community participate in the affairs of the libraries located in their midst?

There are many approaches to community participation in the provision of required services. The following are some of them:

- Matching grant approach;
- Directive approach;
- Non-directive approach;
- Secorial approach;

- Integrated approach, and
- The multiple or team approach.

The last of the approaches involves the use of a team or group of experts to provide variety of services, to deal with the totality of the community's problem. This is based on the idea that, any programme requires the participation of more than one or single experts. Every community is supposed to involve itself in the affairs of libraries situated within its borders with some relevant materials for the development of the society. Community can also build new libraries where none exist.

Reasons for Community Participation in ICT

Libraries are integral part of the educational system of the society. An excellent educational programme can not be developed without the support of well-stocked libraries. The value of books and other library materials in the life of man is very important.

Aguolus (2002), identified six fundamental roles of libraries in society as follows:

- Knowledge conservation;
- Information;
- Education;
- Research;
- Culture; and
- Entertainment

Conservation or preservation of recorded knowledge is the earliest and most basic function of any library. It acquires various kinds of materials

both published and unpublished, written or oral in recorded form and stores them for future use for readers. This role may take various forms. It may involve restrictive loan policy to ensure greater availability of the materials on the shelves for the majority of the uses. Certain materials which are always in demand by readers may not be outside of the libraries. Community should assist in providing some of them.

Information Role

The library is not only an information system. The more complex the society is in its educational requirements, the greater its dependence upon library- basic information services. For instance, in the United States, the public library is considered as a particular form of the freedom of expression guaranteed in the constitution because libraries are conceived as necessity for an informed society to enable the democratic system of government to function effectively. As a product of the society, the libraries must ensure that materials they acquire reflect the needs and aspirations of the society. Community should establish community Libraries and ICT centres.

Educational Role of Libraries

Academic, schools and public libraries perform important educational functions, in a university, the libraries act as a sort of teaching laboratories. The role of libraries in adult education in some

sense compensate for the inability of the society to send all of its children to school. The public libraries act as an agency for continued education for all members of the society. It should provide relevant reading materials to assist government efforts in providing the illiterate adults with education. Libraries are therefore a must for community participation.

Research Role

Research is a systematic investigation towards increasing the knowledge. The universities are established for teaching and research which are not possible without good libraries. Research. Assists to update the curricular contents of the courses offered in various disciplines and enriches the teaching of the lectures. Before one starts one's research, one starts by examining what has already been done in the area in general and in the chosen topic in particular. Good libraries are the first place of visit. The libraries must help researchers to identify, locate and deliver information or documentation sought by students for their educational development. Therefore, the roles of the community in supplementing government efforts is necessary.

Culture Role

Culture is a way of life which include spiritual, ideological, sociological and material elements to a particular society. Culture embodies physical equipment like tools, or mechanical equipment; scholarship (accumulated

experiences, beliefs, myths, rituals, etc; and social organization).

The libraries contribute to the empowerment of the community culturally by stocking relevant materials that promote application of the cultural heritage and its achievements. Libraries should also inculcate in the people the habit of reading not only of their own culture, but the culture of their neighbours. Libraries can play important cultural role in supporting civil and cultural organizations through provisions of accommodation for holding meetings, staging plays, organizing debates or film sows of cultural significance. Libraries serve as documenting centres for the traditional values of the people and making them available in transcript or orally recorded forms.

Recreation Role

One of the roles of libraries is to encourage recreation and constructive use of leisure time. Libraries serve as centres for entertainment reading, viewing and listening materials such as video and audio cassettes, films, etc which may be used in the libraries or borrowed for home use. Recreational facilities will take the minds of the youths away from anti-social behavior such as drug abuse, daba and crimes.

All good libraries must also be equipped with computers and internet system for our youths to go for their empowerments in very many fields.

Internal and International Cooperation.

Internal and international cooperation is encouraged through Internet. One can talk, discuss vital social, economic and political issues through internet. Also, internet encourages exchange of ideas, information, conflict resolution, etc. they should learn that conflict could be resolved but not through violence.

Trade

Through internets, businessmen can trade, a businessman in Nigeria can buy goods from Japan, China, United States of America, etc. without even visiting these places. A Nigerian business men can also export finished goods or raw materials without physically going there. In this way, internet should by provide by community if government could not.

Education

Through the internet, a student could apply to the university of his choice all over the world and may gain admission to study. This saves a lot of money and time. This is really a contribution for youth empowerment. Nigerian universities now inform their prospective students the time of exams, time for admission and admission list all through the internet. This includes payment of school fees, examinations, purchase of application forms, student registration, and results. National Examinations Council (NECO), West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and JAMB Examinations are all through online registration; all these enhance efficiency and accountability. So

ICT is a must for every community to provide if government is too busy with other things to provide.

Social Interaction

Through internet, one can make friend all over the world. Others can see them, can exchange ideas, can even contract marriage through the internet. Friends visit friends who are internet friends. Community should encourage through provision of the facility by self-help effort.

Internet Increase our Knowledge

Through internet one can acquire a vast amount of essential geographical knowledge of the world-climate, rain fall, flora and fauna, relief-mountains, water falls, economy, historical sites, airports, water ways, dams, lakes, rivers, oceans, industrial sites and other wonderful things. Communities should not miss these important things. They should provide the facilities.

Educational Development.

One can acquire high education through the help of internet because there are many universities, colleges and other professional organizations that offer courses through internet. For example, in Malaysia there are institutions that train accountants, public administrators and other professionals through the internet. Some courses in computer science are recognized all over the world. ICT is a must for every serious community.

Employment

Vacant positions are advertised through the internet both in Nigeria and overseas, for example, the Nigerian army, Nigerian air force, Nigeria Police banks, ministries and other organizations advertise vacant positions through internet. Many organizations in America and Europe advertise employment opportunities through the internet. In order not to miss this important opportunity, community should provide these ICT materials in their Libraries.

Newspaper and Magazines

Daily Nigerian Newspapers, magazines, weekend newspapers can be read through internet as early as 12:01 a.m. Thus, one saves money and time and one will know everything about Nigeria in his bed. In this way, internet contributes to the empowerment of youth of the community, and community should have these facilities even through self-help effort since.

There is a strong culture of community participation in community development projects in Africa where community members gathered together (especially the youth) to provide important services of common interest such as clearing the bush and tall grasses in public places like markets, village play grounds, village streets, mending village defence walls, support indispense members or tackling particular problems. So communities should be ready to play roles in our libraries and other social institutions if the existence of these services are relevant to the needs and aspirations of the society in which they are located. If the

material collections of our libraries are inappropriate, there will be loss of interest in the organization. Failure of the library to accommodate the aspirations of its host community in their collections leads to rejection so libraries must include very relevant materials to attract community participation.

Good leadership of libraries will also attract community involvement. According to Shekarau (2006), for any organization to achieve community participation, there must be a responsible, honest, respected and exemplary leadership at all levels. A corrupt and irresponsible leaderships cannot provide the right atmosphere for the community to come forward and participate no matter how well articulated the public enlightenment drive is once the leaders are morally bankrupt. A situation where leaders do not practice what they preach, they cannot attract in any way public participation.

In which Ways do Communities Participate in our libraries and ICT?

Communities could participate in the following ways:

- Funding;
- Infrastructural development;
- Procurement of Materials;
- Maintenance of building and utilities;
- Establishing New libraries; and
- Public enlightenment.

Funding

In Nigeria, the funding of Libraries is tied to national budgets and in most cases, the libraries do not get the actual budget allocated to them. Since the allocation of funds to libraries is inadequate, communities should come forward to supplement the government effort. Olubadewo (1992) asserted that inadequate funding is capable of crippling an organization including libraries.

Infrastructural Development

Communities could participate in infrastructural development in our libraries because they are inadequate and in a bad state of repairs as some of them were built since the colonial times. Modern buildings with enough space and well ventilated are imperative in our libraries, and since the governmental authorities could not provide them, the community could, under proper arrangement.

Procurement Materials

Funds are not available to purchase good and relevant materials, so communities should assist to provide them, because inadequate materials is a threat facing effective operation of libraries as pointed by Andewon (1999). Therefore, equipment like computers, photocopying machines, binding machines and others are necessary thing communities can supply. Some libraries do not have standby generators as national electricity supply is erratic in Nigeria and there is total blackout in libraries whenever there is power failure. In order for the libraries to attain their objectives,

relevant materials have to be provided by either the government or through community intervention.

Maintenance of Buildings

Communities could participate in maintaining libraries because some libraries are in bad shape because of our poor maintenance culture. In most cases, proper attention is not given to the maintenance of available facilities in the libraries – chairs, reading tables, shelves, books, computer, floors, electricity wirings, fittings, bulbs, toilet facilities, plumbing systems and environment. These facilities should from time to time, be services in order to maintain their efficacy.

In Nigeria, people do not have respect for public utilities so people use them any how. Nigerians also believe strongly in replacements rather than maintaining the existing ones. Librarians should take stock of the available equipment and utilities, sort out those that require maintenance and invite community members of repair to replace them.

Establishment of New Libraries

Communities could establish new libraries in places where none exist. It is in the culture of African to provide facilities themselves if they are convinced that the services are useful not harmful to them. We read at the beginning of this essay that some communities provided useful health and educational institutions themselves during the early period of colonial rule and even today. Shekarau (2006) quoted a survey of Qur'anic and Islamiyya schools carried out in 19995 in

Northern Nigeria which revealed the availability of 6.4 million pupils attending these schools which are mostly community sponsored. So if librarian and other public enlightenment organizations could convince communities in the needs to establish libraries, it is sure that they would answer the clarion call to establish new libraries in places where none exist.

Public Enlightenment

The community has to be enlightened on the usefulness and relevance of libraries to it in order to effectively participate. However, the higher literacy level of the community, the higher the level of its participation and appreciation. This brings to mind the question of the introduction of adult literacy and programmes in our libraries to illustrate to the community that libraries are indispensable tools for its progress.

A community whose citizens especially the youth mainly idle and unproductive can hardly have the capacity and the right peace of mind to participate in any community development efforts. So, every thing possible should be done to improve the economic level of the community through provision of ICT materials in our libraries.

Conclusion

The paper is on the community participation in production of Libraries and ICT facilities. It first discusses what libraries and ICT are. It traces the history of community participations by various communities in Nigeria in the provisions of social services. It shows that in

Northern Nigeria, Islamic education was/is provided through community efforts. The paper examines the relevance of computers/ICT materials in the modern economy and community should participate in establishing community ICT facilities.

Recommendations

1. Community and philanthropist should be encouraged to donate books and computer/ICT materials to libraries
2. Communities and wealthy individuals to build community libraries and ICT facilities where none exist.
3. Members of particular communities should sponsor enlightened youths to go round to convince other unformed youths on the relevance of libraries and ICT facilities to modern era.
4. Libraries and ICT materials as much as possible should accommodate the aspiration of communities hosting them.
5. Since provision of library services is one of the facilities recommended in the new National Policy on Education, every university, polytechnics, colleges of education, secondary schools and primary schools should be provided with well-equipped libraries and professional librarians be employed.
6. The business of education and establishment of good libraries with qualified librarians should ne

be left in the hands of government alone. Private organizations such as oil companies, construction industries, manufacturing industries, commercial houses and private wealthy individuals should also assist.

7. Parents should encourage their children in the development of good reading habits by providing small libraries at home stocked with relevant reading materials.