

Original Research Article

LIBRARIES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

The paper established a relationship between the library, education and sustainable development. One important resource for achieving the goals and objectives of education is the library. It discussed the library as a requisition for education for sustainable development at all levels of education. It also emphasized the role of libraries in information dissemination to individuals at all levels. This paper also highlighted the problems militating against the performances of library and educational system and made recommendations. Finally, the paper emphasized the need to reposition and revamp our libraries and the entire educational system in order to make much progress towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Library, Education, Sustainable Development, Nation building*

1.1 Introduction

No meaningful and effective teaching and learning take place without information and information resources because information is power and power belongs to the people. Information is a vehicle that drives people to a better understanding that in turn induces sound judgment and decision-making (Achitabwino, 2007). It is an irrefutable fact that libraries and information centers play an unquestionable role in sustainable development through providing an integral component-information-required in decision-making and mapping the way forward in societies. Libraries of all types acquire, process, organize, store and provide information for survival. Information which is the only preoccupation of libraries is a necessary ingredient in life. In this information age, one must be attuned with reliable and up-to-date information for rational decision-making, enlightening and all round development. With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), libraries not only provide information traditionally but also in electronic forms, hence, bibliographic database. Full text documents and digital library collection are always available to users (Tyonum and Ezeogu, 2015). Information is a crucial factor in sustainable development which libraries are the only key to the necessary ingredients of life. According to Tyonum and Ezeogu (2015), information made available by libraries plays a vital role in educational planning and has become a global phenomenon of great importance and concern in all spheres of human endeavour, especially in the educational sector. It is the integral part of the main plan and achievement of educational activities. He further opined that for education to be effective and efficient, it is essential to have well equipped libraries. Ezekwe and

Muokebe (2012) opined that stocked libraries with books and other digital materials are best legacies that the human race can claim to have, for in the words of Cicero” A room without books is a body without a soul”. This means that any educational institution without a library is not worth its salt. The impact of library services is greatly felt in schools, colleges and universities since libraries permeate the entire fabric of the educational system. Education is recognized as one of the most fundamental building blocks for human development. Its importance in national building cannot be over emphasized. A major outcome of education is sustainable development. No nation can grow beyond its educational system. Education is the bedrock for growth, the key to development, the greatest investment and asset and enhances sustainable development in a nation and the libraries as educational tool for sustainable development has a great role to play towards the realization of the broad goals of education. Hence the topic: Libraries as an educational tool for sustainable development.

1.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to Elaine Nevin 2008, sustainable development emerged as a growing concern about human society’s impact on the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission (formally the World Commission on Environment and Development) as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). This definition acknowledges that while development may be necessary to meet human needs and improve the quality of life, it must happen without depleting the capacity of the natural environment to meet present and future needs. The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainability promotes both the interest of future generation and the earth’s capacity to regenerate. At first it emphasized the environment in development policies but, since 2002, has evolved to compass social justice and the fight against poverty as key principles of sustainable development. In the work of Tyonum and Ezeogu, 2015, sustainable development mean the overall change and improvement in the society as related to the individual in progress in the social, political, religious and economic structure of the nation. A major outcome of education is sustainable development. Shah (2012) noted that sustainable development encompasses a number of areas and stands as the idea of environmental, economic and social progress and equity, all within the limits of the world’s natural resources. Sustainable development not only meets the needs of present generation but also those of future generation. In other words, it is the development that guarantees a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generation to come.

1.3 ROLE OF LIBRARIES

The libraries are considered as a hub of research and information and its role can never be denied by educating the masses. The basis roles of libraries whether academic, school, public, national or special is see as extension of education hence perform the following functions:

Information Services: one of the important roles of the library is information provision which will help augment ideas collected from other sources. Information is an essential element in the communication process. With the advent of ICT, this role is facilitated hence users can access information via the internet to update the knowledge and keep abreast of current trends

Educational role: Education has been defined as a complex of social processes of acquiring knowledge and experience, formally or other. Libraries are there to perform this activity because when a person is informed with information, he/she is equally being educated. Libraries ensure lifelong education by providing various information resources. They also support education by providing supplementary textbooks, reference materials and even non-print materials. Libraries enable the individuals to obtain spiritual, inspirational and recreational activities through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge (Omojuwa, 1993).

National development: Libraries play a great role in national development through the support they offer to the educational sector. It is an irrefutable fact that without libraries there as well can be no universities hence the creation of professionals' drought. All professionals, whether graduates or not, are capable of utilizing their skills through the knowledge they acquired through books and the internet in libraries. Lawyers safeguard the flow of justice and foster constitutional developments; teachers support literacy campaigns; doctors support health issues, the list is endless. All those are product of information dissemination progress through different libraries (Achitabwino, 2007).

Self development: People can develop themselves by going to the library for independent studies. Individualized instruction can take place in the library with or without the help of any teacher yet this ensures expansion of knowledge.

Research role: Research which is an enquiry to discover existing knowledge for the building of theory and solving society problems is an essential activity in the library. the library organizes and presents information materials, thus saving the researchers time in retrieving information. They also provide publication of previous research findings for subsequent references by other researchers.

Cultural services: The library is the chief centre for cultural revival. It is the centre of all cultural activation because it actively promotes participation and appreciation of arts literature which is part of cultural heritage is one of the areas stock materials highlights.

Promotion of marketing tourism sector: Libraries as reservoirs of information are the most reliable information reference centers where tourists can seek information on hotels, motels, national parks, mountains and other interesting places

Training and learning media: The library is an indispensable training and learning laboratory. Some libraries are training media for manpower development.

Access to knowledge: Libraries join resources together for maximum accessibility and usability by the potential users. Information is power and information brings knowledge. Hence the library helps its patrons to access such information and knowledge with ease and in turn prepare individual to prove him/herself as a responsible citizen in contemporary society.

Recreational role: Users can read in the library at leisure for pleasure. Libraries provide various information media (print and non-print) that are used for recreational activities.

2.1 LIBRARY AND EDUCATION

One cannot talk about library without talking about education hence, they cannot be isolated from each other. Libraries have since ages been associated with education. Libraries are tools for sustainable development through the support they offer to the educational sector. The role of libraries services in educational sector cannot be underestimated. These services are greatly felt in elementary schools, colleges and universities even in informal setting since libraries permeate the entire fabric of educational system. John Abdul Kargbo in Achitabwino (2007) argues that experience has shown that a country's educational system could be as strong and as weak as the library resources that support that system. Ejimkonye, Nwogu and Obiagwu (2005) observed that the library is a recognized and essential resources center which no student can afford to dispense with, if he wants to attain his academic goals. Libraries are established for educational purposes. No education can win recognition without organized and well established library. No wonder, the National Universities Commission (NUC) critically evaluates the library before accrediting any education institution.

Libraries foster self-education and stimulate educational growth. Education generally depends on the information resources available. Any effective and qualitative education depends on the library for its teaching, learning, research and expansion of knowledge (Tyonum and Ezeogu, 2015). On the same note, Edom (2006) stated that effective use of libraries is the bedrock of academic excellence. In analyzing the relationship between library and education, Nwosu (2000) stressed that an academic library is the singular most important resources in the pursuit of goals and objectives of the institution of higher learning. She further stated that higher education would be elusive without the libraries. This indispensable role has been reflected in many description of the library in the academic such as "the pivot of knowledge" "the educative aorta of the institution" "the heart of the institution" and so on.

On the other hand , education passes on society's cultural values and accumulated body of knowledge to the next generation (children) and to prepare them for meaningful adult (Ogunsola, 2004). Imparting these society cultural values from generation to generation which is the major role of education is made possible because libraries are the centers for all cultural activities and conserve knowledge and ideas passed from generation to generation and the materials are arranged for present and future use.

The library can be seen as an extension of education. Libraries improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for sustainable development. If education is to have 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 learners. In fact, the library is to education, as the heart is to the body. As the heart pumps blood to the body so does the library pump information and learning materials to education. Education and libraries are interdependent on each other. Education without libraries and libraries without education are paralyzed. Hence it is an indispensable part of the educational sector.

2.2 LIBRARIES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Libraries are viewed as an important component of the massive educational effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria, without the library no meaningful academic effort can be carried out (Sobalaje and Ogunmodede, 2015). 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 inducement and elevation of the people of a community. It is indispensable element the absolute well being of the citizens for their sustainable development. Any effective and qualitative education depends on the library for its teaching, learning, research, consultation and expansion of knowledge. Edom (2006) stated that effective use of library is the bedrock of academic excellence. Thus the library is the most important resource in the pursuit of broad goals and objectives of educational institution. 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 can never alone impart education, each of them is dependent upon a library-center of wholesome education, and the quencher of thirst for concrete, fathomless, ultimate knowledge.

Education is the most sociological tool for sustainable development in any nation. It is on this platform that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in her National Policy on Education stated that:

Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an educational revolution (FRN, 2004).

Through education, people's minds think positively and by extension, they can take care of themselves, induces sound judgment and decision- making and also a nation's resources can be harnessed. Education as a long-term investment guarantees a nation its bright future. The technological advancement in the world today is attributed to education, thus any country yearning for sustainable development must accord education a priority. Any nation that is intellectually bankrupt will certainly be socially, politically and economically bankrupt.

Qualitative and functional education enhances individuals' ability to survive in the contemporary society and fosters sustainable socio-economic development. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) demonstrated that the principal actors in the education industry are teachers, librarians, parents, youths, government and society at large. They further stated that education is a tool for growth and development. Since no modern society can function without an intensive use of books and information and libraries guarantee improved information services and national development. Therefore library is an educational tool for sustainable development.

2.3 PROBLEMS MILITATING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE OF LIBRARIES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Unfortunately, at present, the greatest challenge libraries face as an educational tool for sustainable development is high illiteracy rate. Most information is on print and most people cannot read and write. Justin Kiyimba in Achitabwino (2007) went on to say that coupled with illiteracy is the fact that even those who can read and write have little interest in reading. Other problems include lack of trained personnel in librarianship that is provision of grants for training of personnel to attend seminars, workshops and conferences, lack of resources, out dated collections, financial constraints, inadequate library services, poor distribution network of libraries, lack of viable bases for research works and publishing industry that can publish and provide survey and report, epileptic power supply and general low perception of the relevance of libraries.

In other hand, education has some problem affecting it purpose to sustainable development. Some of these problems are:

- Poor funding- Embezzlement of fund meant for educational development purposes;
- Inadequate qualified teachers;
- Inadequate education facilities such as well equipped libraries, laboratories etc;
- Dilapidated infrastructures;
- Politics- The formulation and implementation of educational programmes in Nigeria are becoming increasingly politicized at all levels of government;
- Treating education with disdain;
- Lack of research and development.

3.1 CONCLUSION

It is evident from aforementioned that libraries play a significant role in educating the citizenry of a nation. Libraries are essential to our economic well being, the improvement of learning, meeting the challenges of information overload. Libraries as educational tool are core to sustainable national development. The libraries through education are instrumental for sustainable development as they harness information which is considered an imperative component in the development cycle. If Nigeria can pay serious attention to education and

libraries, she will overcome some of her problems and become one of the top 20 economics in the world in the year 2020.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above problems bedeviling our libraries as educational tool for sustainable development, this paper recommends that:

- Government should provide adequate funds for libraries to enable them perform their roles in educating the citizens;
- Qualified or professional librarians should be employed to man the libraries;
- Adequate ICT and other educational facilities should be provided;
- There should be steady power supply in the libraries for effective use of ICT facilities;
- Government should be involved immensely in the affairs of library in educational sector;
- Current and valuable materials should be provided to enable researchers in their fields and development;
- More classrooms and educational centers should be constructed among others.

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