Education, Library and Information: Challenges of a Tripartite Agents in Nigerian National Development

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Abstract: Nigeria after fifty seven years of existence has little or no remarkable development. While education all over the world is recognized as an important catalyst in national development, can such be of Nigeria? What value is placed on information in Nigeria? What importance is library giving in the formulation and implementation of our educational and national development policies and programme as is done in other countries? These are some of the issues this paper looked at, with review of relevant literature on education, information and library in national development. The exploratory approach was used for this study; a review of scholars views on education, library and information on national development. The paper looked at some factors that poses challenges to the trio of education, library and information driving our national development, finally, drawing attention to the need to give library and information their right place in national development through education. The paper found out that Poor accessibility, equitability and affordability of qualitative education, Poor reading culture, poor access to information, Low information literacy level, poor funding of the education sector, poor implementation of education policies and programmes and little or non-involvement of the Nigerian Library Association in planning and implementation of national plans and programmes are some of the challenges against these tripartite agents playing their full roles in national development. The value of this paper lies in its identification and discussion on review of the views and position on the concepts of education, library and information in our national development. This is expected to challenge our government to be more committed to exploiting these three agents towards our national development.
Keywords: Education, Library, Information, Challenges, Agents, Nigeria, National Development

Introduction

The idea of national development is not a new one. It is a journey nations of the world have been battling with all their existence as a nation. Some have succeeded and are now known as developed/advanced nations while very many countries are still on the process, these are known as developing, less developed or third world countries with Africa and Asia constituting the bulk of this. The national development involves economic growth, modernization, equitable distribution of income and national resources, political participation and social economic transformation, food security, high literacy rate, low mortality rate etc for improved living standard of people through the use of country's human, natural and institutional resources. National development, therefore, is a holistic growth of a nation for the betterment of the citizens of that country and the nation itself.

In the quest for our national development, Nigeria at one time in our history or the other have introduced various economic and educational programs and policies among which are the UPE, UBE, Vision 2010, NEEDS, vision 20:2020, 7- Point Agenda etc. The place of education is always upheld. For example the Federal Government of Nigeria in its 2004 NEEDS programme set goals and strategies in investing in its citizens to enhance their lives and contribute to the national development. The third goal is to use education as a

tool for improving the quality of life through skill acquisition and job creation for poverty reduction. Also, one of the strategies set to achieve this goal is to ensure that 50% percent of tertiary education graduates acquire sufficient technical skills, and knowledge to be self-employed and wealth creators. National philosophy dictates the tune of educational goals and aims which in turn give birth to a well thought out Educational curriculum. Hence, the curriculum is society oriented. After 57 years of independence with several sound educational policies and programmes Nigeria is still faced with unimaginable challenges of ignorance, poverty – both of the mind and economic, infant and maternal mortality, uncontrollable population growth, high illiteracy rate, poor access to education, unequal education opportunity, poor access to information, and technological overdependence among other marks of underdevelopment. Education through impartation of knowledge / information has the capacity to liberate man from these challenges and set him on course for a better life.

The knowledge/information, education uses to teach and enlighten man is provided by the library as information resources. Agbo & Onyekweodiri (2015) stated that the library is variously and frequently referred to as the heart of an institution, the mind of a society, the only effective repository of knowledge, the racial memory, a live depository of cultural past, a sustainer of the intellectual activities that anticipate the future among others. These underline the importance of library in the society. Library collects resources in various formats, process them, preserve/conserve and disseminate same, their parent organizations supporting the activities that have direct or indirect contribution to national development. William (2016) said that the Cape Town declaration was inspired by the principles enshrined in the charter for African Cultural Renaissance, the global sustainable development agenda and the level of commitment to prioritise and resource libraries as part of Africa agenda 2063. Hence, the deliberation, on the status of libraries in the continent and the progress required to meet the global sustainable development goal.

Owusu-Ansah in Anunobi and Udem (2014) gave the definition of information as factual data, ideas, and other knowledge emanating from any society that are identified as being of value, sometimes gathered on a regular basis, organized in some fashion, transmitted to others, and used in some meaningful way. Modern economies are judged rich or poor based on the quantity and of course the quality of information available and accessible to the government and citizens of a nation. In line with this, an IDR report cited in Okoro (2005) stated categorically that information is the master resource of our time, the chief raw material and principal product of modern economies and that as a social discourse, accessibility issues are becoming more crucial with the emergence of information society. Before the 21st century, distance played a major barricading role in accessing information but today the era of information explosion driven by information and communication technology (ICT) especially through the internet, a digital revolution involving transfer of data, image etc. that distance has been greatly bridged. The fall out is the concept of globalization. ICT has turned the World into a global village, where one can access global information from anywhere across the globe within split of seconds of few clicks and scrolling on your internet enabled device. It was Francis Bacon who said that "information

is power". It has the potential of transforming life. However, it is only with right information that you can make an informed decision. The person that have the right information, at the right time and use it well will always be ahead of the people that do not have it. Education, information and library are tripartite agent that plays complementary roles in national development. One needs the order to fulfill its role.

This paper therefore, is aimed at reviewing some literature-on the relationship of education, library and information and national development. The review is necessary as it will bring to bear and reaffirm the place of education – a liberator of mankind, information, the liberating tool and library a clearing house of the various liberating tools. The paper discusses some of the challenges against the national development tied to the trio and make some recommendations.

Review of Literature on Education, Library and Information in National development

The need of man is constantly changing to reflect his present state. Information (knowledge) is needed to meet this need; people acquire this information through learning, an education process. Mathew and Okeagu (2009) in their work concluded that a country's capacity to take advantage of the knowledge economy depends on how quickly it can become a learning economy. Information age/society/knowledge society demands that one be constantly abreast with the rapid and diverse information output. The library is the clearing house or the 'circuit breaker' for the information surge. Essia (2004) discussed that equitable distribution of social wealth implies equal educational opportunities for all, just as self-sustaining national development requires a more educated population. Thus on one hand, education is a major "dividend of development" which every Nigerian deserves, and on the other hand education is the most important requirement for further development. Magwi and Tong (2009) observed that the place of libraries and the role it plays in the context of education and national development is recognized by our 6-3-3-4 educational policy. Essia (2004) holds that national development is indicated not only by level and change in GDP, but also by the degree of distribution of income and availability or relevant social services and infrastructure. These economic activities of course require adequate information to be achieved.

This information is generated/collected, processed, stored and disseminated by libraries and information/research centers to the society either in the Universities or to the players in the business, government (policy makers), bankers, manufacturers etc disseminates the information to use towards national development. In this line Amadi (2012) argued that the fastest way to economic development in modern world today is education and that it has become more important in this 21st century as the bulk of economic transactions are now based on information platform. Para (2010) posits that Nigeria is eager to be among the top 20 economies of the world by the year 2020 and has therefore embraced some development strategies one of which is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but the realization of these goals may not be attained without library and information support. Vitro cited in Opara (2010) noted rightly that the causative difference between the developed and developing country is the way they use or do not use information. Without adequate information for the people, they cannot make reasonable changes in

their present situation. No wonder Okojie (2009) called on the Federal Government of Nigeria to give more support to the library and information science sector. In 2002 World Bank observed that Nigerian Universities are still struggling to provide basic facilities, funding and adequate information that could enable the lecturers create and apply new knowledge, innovations and develop analytical perspectives on development problems and also provides services to the public and private sector. It is unfortunate many years after, the story is still the same as it is major part of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) demands from the Federal Government of Nigeria. Successive governments have failed to muster enough political will to allocate the education sector a reasonable percentage of the country's budget.

Adimorah in Misau (2006) enumerated areas information is needed in organization as conducting research into effects of specific industrial market, information about other organization location and identification of raw materials, supplies, buyers, trade names, specific business opportunities, share of market credit, information needed to solve routine problems concerning transportation, taxation and consumer relations. Oyinloye, Tabawa and Aku (2016) concluded that for a society to grow more efficiently in all aspects of the society (developing countries) must collect and provide access to adequate and up-to-date information on security, health, education, tourism, youth empowerment, gender equality, environment amongst others. It is only the library that is in the better position to collect such information because of the training of the Librarians in information generation, management and dissemination.

Poverty is the greatest bane of development, more so national development; ignorance, fear and lack of self-confidence are all features of poverty. But with a good national philosophy, educational objectives that produces a national educational curriculum for the country, these features will be wiped out. Williams (2016) reported that in goal 2 of the UN agenda and aspiration 1 of the AU agenda 2063, the objective is to eradicate poverty at all levels and in all walks of life. Consequently, some countries have relied on libraries to pass on valuable information to the prospective targets, for example, in the attempt to increase the production and income for small-scale food producers or farmers in Romania, public library staff trained under the Biblionet programme worked with other partners including the Association of Libraries of Romania (ANBPR), the ministry of Culture, local and national government and public libraries across the country. Biblionet helped libraries to breathe new life into Romanian communities by helping 100,000 farmers use new ICT (Williams, 2016). Again, Sri Lankan government and its partners initiated a program called the Nenasala program. This initiative is run to increase digital literacy and access to information among the nations' remote and poorest areas. Nenasala (Wisdom Outlet) is a telecenter project by the Government of Sri Lanka developed under the e-Sri Lanka Initiative, which is implemented by the ICT Agency for Sri Lanka (William, 2016). Communication centers are built on continuous basis by the government in rural areas to fight poverty, develop culture and commerce, thereby sustaining peace. There are 751 such centers in the country he added.

According to IFLA (2015), Botswana Library Association developed a strategy to identify where libraries contribute to Botswana Vision 2016, wherein libraries are acting as an Educated and Informed Nation Pillar. They collect, organise and disseminate information that society access and use to inform themselves on various issues of life. However, attainment of the Vision extends beyond just informing and educating, it cuts across all the pillars by empowering communities through knowledge and the ability to access information they need. Similarly, Zimbabwe Library Association is currently seeking to align libraries to participate in national development through the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset). While in the United States, the National Broadband Plan recognises the role of libraries and other community organisations in providing training and access to high-speed Internet. And in Moldova, libraries are contributing to Open Government Partnership (OGP) action plans, a platform between government, civil society and business to drive commitments to open government and accountability. Librarians attend civil society meetings to help develop the country's national action plan, and to include the role of libraries as a supporter of access to information (IFLA, 2015).Mangembia (2011) stated that the objectives of public libraries are crucial role in educational, economic, political, social, and cultural development of the country and that public library in Zimbabwe has supported the economic and social development of the country by providing right information at the right time to the right people. The role he said has also been assumed by local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) by establishing information centres to make information available freely to locals in pursuit of information to fulfill different agendas. For instance the Zimbabwe Women Resource Network (ZWRN) provides information regarding to human rights, gender violence and equality in order to change their social and economic status (Mangembia, 2011).

The review has strongly asserted that the trio of education, library and information are major catalysts in any nation's development. This is because of their vital and complementary roles. None of them is an end in itself. Liberation of man from ignorance and poverty is a foundation of rational thinking, good interpersonal relationship and productivity. These tripartite agents facilitates them, thereby guaranteeing national development. However, there are few challenges that are cogs in the wheel of their venture as discussed below.

Challenges of the Trio in Performing their Roles in Nigerian National Development
- **Access to education**

National development requires the effort and contributions of all the citizens and education is a major player in the process. These include basic and tertiary education. Egunyomi cited in Aliero, Jabo and Tsafe (2010) said that no nation can achieve development if the citizens are not sufficiently educated to meet the challenges of the fast changing world especially in the industrial sector. Thomas Jefferson once argued that "the people are capable of governing themselves if they have adequate education and information". But the question of accessibility, equitability and affordability of qualitative education has been a problem in Nigeria with successive governments since independence initiating one educational programme or the other towards solving that. Unfortunately

this gap is not being bridged. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched in Sokoto State by the then President and addressed some emerging issues in the educational system to eradicate mass illiteracy which should be seen as one of the most important structure that should be giving a pride of place if the programme is considered a worthwhile venture (Chukwuji, Nwankwo, Tsafe,,Sule, and Yusuf, 2017). The illiteracy rate of the country is still very high, an indication that the quadruple issues of accessibility, equitability, affordability and qualitative education in Nigeria is yet to be over. Aliero, Jabo and Tsafe (2010) said that contribution of Nigerian educational system to the national development after fifty years of transition and transformation leaves a lot to be desired. The administration of former president Jonathan came up with the policy that every state in Nigeria should have a federal university so as to make tertiary education accessible to all Nigerian, good as this may be, the high cost of fees in Nigerian universities is not helping matters as good number of students withdraw half way. Scholarship schemes are not enough both in number and volume of fund. There are cases of abandoned students oversee because of insufficient fund. The recent case of Kaduna State teachers raises strong questions on the quality of input and output in our educational system.

- ▪ **Poor Policy Implementation**

Poor implementation of government policies is undoubtedly the greatest challenge the Nigerian state has. Corroborating this as regards our education system, Aliero, Jabo and Tsafe (2010) posits that it is unfortunate that since independence Nigeria has not implemented fully any of the educational policies apparently because of corruption. Our administrators are good at formulating good policies but lack the political will to see them implemented to the later. Kukogho (2015) writing on education policies and implementation quoted the Vice Chancellor of University of Maidugiri Nigeria, Professor Ibrahim Njodi as saying that:

> "Nigeria's education sector is facing many challenges mainly because successive governments have failed to properly implement the various policies so far introduced. As successive governments are coming in with new policies and sweeping the old ones under the carpet, institutions are confused with the actual policy to adopt. "No one knows whether the 6-3-3-4 policy is still in use. The problems in the sector are poor implementation, not the lack of positive policies. If things are to change in the sector, the government must ensure that any policy introduced is fully implemented".

The findings of Okoroma (2006) blame the distortions in the Nigeria educational system on the ineffective implementation engendered primarily by lack of political will, lack of continuity of programs, and corruption. According to him the situation has hindered national development and, until urgent action is taken to review Nigeria's educational system, its national aspirations will continue to be compromised. He concluded by recommending the discontinuation of the National Policy on Education fashioned after the American system and proposed the adoption of the model practiced by Asian

countries such as Japan, China and India which takes the culture of the people into consideration.

▪ **Poor Reading Culture**

One of the major format information can be documented is on paper and the only way to decode that information or knowledge is through reading. Reading, therefore, is a very fundamental skill in learning. The state of literacy of any individual is usually measured by the person's ability to read and write. For Nwabueze and Iwekpeazu (2012) reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built because through reading, information can be acquired which bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance. There is this popular saying by the white man, "if you want to hide anything from a black man you put it in a book". This implies that we don't read. Poor reading culture has in the recent past become a disheartening issue in Nigeria. One thing is providing the needed materials as the libraries do and another thing is optimal utilization of these materials. However, Achitabwino (2007) said that the greatest barrier to information provision in Malawi by libraries for the promotion of democracy and socio-economic issues is high illiteracy rate. Most of the information is in print and over half of the population of Malawians cannot read and write, that affects our national development. Reading culture according to Nwabueze and Iwekpeazu (2012) is the type of culture that sees continuous and dedicated reading of information resources by people, children, students and adults for knowledge acquisition, which will be applied practically for development. Agwu and Kalu (2010) opined that the basis for the development of all civilization lies with vibrant educational system and that sustainable reading culture is at the epicenter of those values. They said that in recognition of the importance of reading culture UNESCO celebrates World Book and Copyright day every year in promotion of reading, publishing and intellectual property. However, scholars have advanced some factors responsible for poor reading culture, among which are poor home environment, poor implementation of government policies, poor funding to education sector, poor library facilities including reading materials, change in value system among the youths, inexperienced class teachers, inexperienced library officers, absence of library hour in curriculum, non-teaching of use of library especially in primary and post primary schools among others. Worst situation is this era of ICT where everybody is on the go with internet enabled devices. Social media is taking lots of productive times of our youth who engage in chat where cut and paste sentences are used. They find it difficult these days to sit down and read fairly voluminous books.

▪ **Low Information Literacy**

Information literacy is a relatively new concept in the world of information. For some scholars like Debbi and Holloway in Madu and Akinboro (2012) it has replaced the term user education or library skills. It has been interpreted as study skills, research skills, library skills, bibliographic instruction and library orientation in educational context by Alabi, Nduka and Olatise (2011). According to American Library Association (1989) in Northedge(2015):

"Information literate people[…] know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information […] They are people prepared for lifelong learning because they can always find the information needed […] To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information."

Information literacy is thought by librarians in our tertiary schools and in some post primary schools and studies has shown that students' usage of library is still very poor. Libraries should see how the informal learning sector can be taught information literacy. There are people outside the school system like the artisans, traders, farmers and others who also needs one piece of information or the other. Computer literacy is an aspect of information literacy. ICT is fast defining the world with millions and millions of information being uploaded and downloaded on daily basis. Non computer literate citizens – students, artisans, and workers would certainly be left behind in knowledge update thereby reducing their productivity and by implication affecting their contribution to national development.

▪ **Poor Access to Information**
If information is key to national development, especially in today's world of information society, then access to information should be without hindrance or at least minimal hindrances. Bridging the gap between the information haves and have not's is the desired result. Even though this gap cannot be totally bridged, an appreciable impact is possible. The open access initiative was initiated for this purpose. Some of the challenges to access to information and use as given by Ugah (2007) are lack of awareness; inaccessibility; information explosion; bibliographic obstacle: environment; poor infrastructure; declining budgets and rising costs; costs for users; staff attitude toward users; and crime. These challenges obviously may not apply to all information providers all together, but will differ from one library to another, hence, the need for the libraries to identify the ones peculiar to them and focus all their resources towards overcoming them. Omagbemi &Tomori, (2016) writing on Freedom of Information Bill said that lack of access to information impairs the democratic process as well as being inimical to economic, social and cultural growth. They posit that the benefit of the Commonwealth of knowledge and input of the citizens in contributing to informed decision or policy formulation and implementation which are meant to enhance governance have remained absent. The implication of these of course is that governance without the application of knowledge; government policies are formulated with jaundiced information and inadequate data. Hughes in Chiya and Tsafe (2017) advised the UN not to overlook access to information in crafting the goal on governance. If access to information is omitted in the post-2015 agenda there in a risk that in African countries a top-down development agenda will be created and that will not deny individuals and communities the opportunity to take control of achieving their own development. Challenges of neglecting access to information according to Chiya and Tsafe (2017) would lead to:
• Poor decision-making – incomplete and secret information often leads to decision-making that does not respond to the needs of the community;

- *Waste of fund and effort* – research on the information needs of individuals and communities suggests that they face obstacles in locating and using the right information for their own benefit
- Reinventing the wheel avoid creating development policies that lack support for information intermediaries and infrastructure.

▪ **Little or non-inclusion of Libraries in National Planning**

The Nigerian Library Association(NLA) like their counterparts in other countries of the world are not part of the initiatives and implementation of national development agendas like Vision 20:20:20, NEEDS, etc. it is not enough to mention library in some of them. More pathetic is the Freedom of Information Law which did not recognize the library. Oyinloye, Tabawa and Aku (2016) recommended that librarians should be carried along in the process relating to national development for their impact to be felt.The NLA should wake up from her slumber and brace up to the situation by mounting advocacy programmes, lobbying and coming up with proposals for our relevance in our national development programmes. Chiya and Tsafe (2017) affirmed the involvement of the world umbrella body of libraries, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in developing the UN 2030 agenda. They recognized the importance of the agenda and the role information will play in achieving these goals and targets. Hence, since 2012, IFLA advocated for the following to be integrated in the agenda:

- Ensuring access to information
- Safeguarding of cultural heritage
- Access to information and communication technologies

And they are well represented in the agenda as we have it in the UN 2030 agenda (Lapuz, 2017). As clearing house for information/knowledge, governments at all levels should carry libraries and librarians along in their planning and implementation of future national development programmes.

▪ **Poor funding**

Funding is a very important factor in the success of any venture that requires money. Education is obviously an expensive venture which made many to say that it should not be left to the government alone that private individuals are to be allowed to participate at various levels of education provision in Nigeria though they seem better off than the government because they are running their private business, some of their facilities are not really worth it. The government on its part has not been able to properly fund the education sector, which is a serious concern to stakeholders. According to Umma (2013) the millennium development agenda (MDA) recommended that at least 26% of the annual budgetary provision of developing countries be allocated to education. But unfortunately Nigeria, a signatory to that agenda has performed far less than desired in this regard. The table below is an excerpt from Adedigba (2017) analysis on the budget allocation percentage of the educational sector from 2010 to the most current 2018 proposal.

Table 1: Nine Years Budgetary Allocation to Education in Nigeria

YEAR	PERCENTAGE (%)
2010	7.10
2011	9.32
2012	9.16
2013	10.15
2014	10.54
2015	10.78
2016	7.12
2017	7.40
2018	7.04

(Source: Adedigba (2017)

However, Ukeje (2004) in Umma (2013) stated that the case with our budgeting does not stop at how much is budgeted but how much is actually allocated to each of the MDAs and how much is actually released on the long run and for what has it been spent. Why successive Nigerian government has failed to take the budgetary allocation of education to the prescribed 26% is something questionable. Perhaps lack of political will or non-regard or acceptance of education as a catalyst in the national development as have been witnessed in other countries of the world.

Conclusion

National development is the all-round transformation of a nation and its citizens. The world is now in the information age with information as a factor of production. There cannot be any meaningful development without the right information. Libraries provide access to recorded human knowledge / information. Education is the process of teaching and enlightening the citizens with the right information/knowledge/skills. The trio education, library and information are interrelated and play complementary roles in national development. Countries of the world are now duly recognizing the important of libraries to national development via access to right information and are also carrying them along in their various development plans but this is not to be said of Nigeria. Industrial development is not possible without relevant information regarding its management and operations as it takes an informed manager to make an informed decision. It was also said that some factors like poor access to education, poor reading culture, non-inclusion of Nigerian Library Association in national planning programmes, poor access to information, poor policy implementation, low information literacy, and of course the greatest of them all, poor funding pose serious challenges to the trio in playing their role in national development.

Recommendations

From the foregoing it is recommended that:

1. Government must as a matter of necessity and urgency ensure full implementation of policies that will guarantee accessibility, equitability and affordability of qualitative education to Nigerians of school age.

2. The government should bring on board the Nigerian Library Association in all their national development programs and policies from planning stage to implementation stage.

3. Government should ensure that budgetary provision for the education sector is raised to at least 20% and ensure that the funds were actually released and judiciously used if they truly want to give education its rightful place in our quest for national development.

4. Libraries are to identify their own impediment to information access and work assiduously towards surmounting the challenges as no challenge is insurmountable for as long the needed will power and resources are available.

5. Nigerian Library Association, Libraries and the government should as a matter of necessity mount a sustainable campaign on information literacy.

6. The current reading programme being embarked upon by the public libraries should by intensified and sustained.

7. Deliverable policies on Information and information and communication technology must be in place and implemented at all levels.

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