



EDUCATION

READINGS
IN HONOUR OF

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Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are thereby recommended:

- The child, as a member of the society and as a leader of tomorrow should be allowed to fully exercise his rights in the society.
- The school (as an agent of socialization) should give the child an atmosphere of freedom and peace. A hostile school environment prevents effective learning.
- The school should bridge the gaps between the pupils and all the social and political institutions existing within the locality. The home is the first point of call for the child hence, the need for the child to have a sense of belonging. Allowing the child to contribute to discussions germane to his life is a positive step in the right direction.
- The objectives for teaching social studies at various levels would need to be expanded to further include more concrete attempts at promoting citizenship and human rights education.
- Social studies teachers need to put more emphasis on issues or topics that promote peace, unity and freedom in their lessons.

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LIBRARY AND SOCIETY: MEETING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE RURAL DWELLERS OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the importance of the library in human society making mention of the various types of library and their usefulness. It goes on to talk about the situation of Nigeria where there are a lot of rural dwellers who cannot benefit from the services of the regular or conventional libraries because of their low literacy levels. The paper then presents some of the things that could be done to ensure that the information needs of these rural dwellers are met for individual, communal and national development.

INTRODUCTION

The library, basically speaking, serves the purpose of meeting the information needs of every member of a society or community. All other roles of the library like knowledge expansion, individual learning, recreational and economic (Ugwuanyi, 1998) rotate round the central role of information provision. Thus it is clear that in order to witness a balanced growth in every sector of human life, the library should be available in every community so that the members of the community can learn to find out and use the various information materials therein for development in all spheres of life, be it economic, social or political.

In order to accomplish this mission of providing information to various people in the society, there are different types of library that cater for various categories of people. They include the National, Academic, School, Public, Special and Private libraries. The National and Public libraries are opened to anybody who needs their services. The Academic libraries are found in higher institutions like universities, polytechnics and colleges of education; School libraries are those found in secondary and primary schools. Both the Academic and School libraries cater for only the staff, pupils or students of the institution. A Private library is that library

owned by an individual; the owner may or may not allow other people to consult the library. While all these libraries afore-mentioned stock information on all areas of knowledge there is a type that stocks information on a particular subject or on a group of related subjects. This is known as a Special library; it may be owned by a government, organisation or even an individual. The content of a Special library is determined by the interest of the parent organisation. For example, if an institute of agriculture owns a Special library, the information materials found therein will be on agriculture and other related subjects.

Whatever the type, wherever found, the fact remains that libraries are primarily set up to disseminate information to their patrons, clients or users. However, it is very glaring that a conventional library situated in a typical Nigerian rural community can not live up to expectations. This point is related to what Ochai (1995) has observed by stating that libraries of the developing nations "have not succeeded in eliminating or reducing at an appreciable level the illiteracy level at the grassroots even though we have been promised literacy for all by the year 2000." This observation shows that libraries are not meeting the need of rural communities. This situation calls for urgent attention as many of the masses live in these rural areas and if there is going to be accelerated development in the developing nations, appropriate steps must be taken to correct the anomaly of their information needs not being met. In order to redress the damage done, one needs an insight into what is responsible for the present situation.

The Nigerian Situation

Ochai (1995) has rightly observed that all structures, be they administrative, political, social, cultural and some other ones, inherited by the developing nations from the colonial masters are not yielding the desired results. The educational sector which includes the library is not an exception of these crumbling institutions. Thus according to Ochai (1995), there is the need for a revision to see the applicability of the foreign models to the African situation.

The entity called Nigeria is a West African country and although it is referred to as the giant of Africa, her economic and socio-political situation is similar to what is generally found in other developing nations. CONNOHPD (1997), describes the Nigerian sorry situation by stating that:

Nigeria is also a giant in social problems. Its primary school population is more than the entire population of some of its neighbouring countries. Its maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world. More than half of the adult population is

illiterate – an amazing statistic in a country that had universal free primary education in parts of the country when its neighbours were just expanding schools beyond the urban capitals (p.viii)

In the light of the above statement, it is very clear that there are problems here and there in the Nigerian society despite the fact that a so-called developed nation has colonised her for years and has tried to impose her own "civilised" system on Nigeria. This shows that both development and underdevelopment are simultaneous products of the same imperialist system; development for the imperialist powers, and underdevelopment for the 'wretched of the earth' (Onimode, 1983).

Having realized that the colonial master made policies that are totally not suitable for Nigeria, there is the need for a review of our development strategy. According to Ijiomah (2002), this involves investing in the people, institutions, and networks in order for Nigeria to tap the growing global knowledge base for the needs of her people. Ijiomah goes further to state that benefiting from the global knowledge base will require going beyond general policy advice based on standard economic theory to more pragmatic advice on implementing and managing change. This is applicable to all facets of human endeavours not just economic aspect including librarianship which is a sub-facet of the educational sector.

Nigerian library schools have done a lot to produce many qualified librarians who can work successfully in various parts of the world including the developed world to ensure that the right information gets to the right user at the right time which is the rationale for setting up libraries. However, going by the low level of development in the country and the abject poverty of most of the rural populace one can boldly say that the right information is not getting to the right user at the right time in all communities. The training for librarianship passed down through western education must have been designed for societies that have structures and institutions that are well developed and people that are literate. But the Nigerian situation is different CONNOHPD (1997), put adult literacy at 52%, this means that a large percentage of the Nigerian adults are not literate yet. This group of people need information for various purposes in life. In talking about the confusion created by receiving western education and meeting the information needs of Africans, Nawe (1993) has not failed to mention that African nations are at crossroads in the sense that her librarians receive constant flow of information from all parts of the world through the development of telecommunications and computerisation but unfortunately,

at this stage of development Africans cannot utilise very sophisticated information because it would not meet their needs and even if it were to meet it, the sophisticated technology could not be applied because the necessary facilities are not available. (p. 6)

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that African librarianship which is being developed in the Anglo-American style of librarianship and information provision is not totally meeting the information needs of Africans especially those at the grassroots. This fact has been clearly summarized by Nawe (1993): "that, information though global in nature is context oriented."

Since the information needs and information seeking behaviour of Westerners and many Africans, especially those at the grassroots who are mostly illiterates, are different and African librarians are being educated in Anglo-American style of librarianship, it can be seen that there are problems in meeting the information needs of the African rural dwellers generally and those of Nigeria in particular.

Meeting the Information Needs of the Rural Populace

September (1993), observes that survival at the level of information provision and at other levels of development requires that information be used to cope with life's daily demands. This observation shows that personal and societal development will be hindered if the needed information is not available. No wonder that there is mass illiteracy and abject poverty in the rural areas of Nigeria since the Western education being received by Nigerian librarians is a misfit for information provision to Nigerian rural dwellers.

In discussing the issue of "urban libraries" (or replica?) in rural areas, Ochai (1995) says that librarians assume that the rural populace need libraries in order to meet their information needs. Therefore, library services are extended to them using the models employed in developed nations forgetting that the Nigerian rural communities are not functionally literate society. Thus Nigerian rural libraries patterned after the libraries of the technologically advanced countries of the world are irrelevant. Agada (1986) in Ochai (1995) is also of this view saying that since the library concept did not grow naturally from our cultural setting, we cannot entrench its services into all areas of our communal life.

In order to avoid forcing square pegs into round holes, it is important to have a library that can be adapted to suit the information needs of the rural dwellers of Nigeria. Knowing the various categories and characteristics of the intended patrons of such library will help us to design the 'rural library.' Ochai (1995) describes them as follows:

School children and apprentices, farmers, petty traders, carpenters, hunters, drummers, bricklayers, laundres, blacksmiths and bicycle repairers. Most of them are non-literates and even expect someone to read and reply their letters. Yet they form about seventy percent

(70%) of the country's population and the backbone of the agricultural economy. (pp. 166-167)

Therefore, a functional library for the rural dwellers of Nigeria will have a mixture of the elements of the conventional library and the African way of passing an information.

- To start with, a place in a conducive environment will be needed though not with all the modern paraphernalia of the modern library like having fans, lighting, air-conditioners, information communication technology and all the equipment that make use of electricity which is lacking in many rural areas of Nigeria. But the place must have fairly decent reading chairs and tables; shelves and some other necessary but simple furniture.
- There must also be information materials in print form to meet the needs of the few pupils and students found in these areas. Such information materials will consist of subject textbooks, newspapers and story books. Certain simple reference materials like handbooks can also be stocked for the general use of farmers and others who may need information on agriculture, on general repairs, market days, dates, public holidays and some other relevant information.
- The rural library should also have a dynamic librarian who can help the pupils and students to use the available information materials for their benefits; he should also be able to use them for the non-literate which means he should be a bi-linguist or multi-linguist: he must be able to read in English which is the official language of Nigeria and be able to translate or communicate the content to the illiterates.
- In some places like certain parts of Ogun State of Nigeria, the rural community is made up of the Egun and Awori people. Therefore, a rural librarian in such places must be a multi-linguist, being able to use English, Awori and Egun languages very well. Such librarian must also be very friendly in order to encourage patronage of the rural library. He must also be ready to appreciate the culture of the people to certain tolerable level.
- Patronage of the rural library will be encouraged if the librarian can take the pains of coming to the level of the rural dwellers and breaking the walls of formalities to a reasonable extent. The rural librarian should be able to come to the level of all the various categories of the people in the community by being friendly with children, courteous to elders and respecting all. This attitude will make all of them to feel free to consult him or use the rural library.

In order to make the rural library more relevant to the people, concerted effort can be made to translate some very useful documents to the indigenous language of a particular rural community so that those who are literate in the language can benefit from the content of such documents.

To make the library inviting to all, certain activities like having readers' club and film shows can be introduced into the library. The readers' club can involve various groups of readers or age grades having suitable literature read to their hearing for both recreational and educative purposes. Film shows can involve various informative films being shown that can teach moral values and some other ones that can aid the various artisans in the community to perform better on their jobs. However, since there is no electricity supply in some of these rural communities and even where it is found it is epileptic in nature, the library must be ready to procure and maintain a power generating set.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The place of the library in human society has been considered and it has been observed that the different types of libraries in our society help to communicate information to various groups of people but it was discovered that the peculiar nature of the rural areas of developing nations does not allow the rural people to benefit from the services of a conventional library. Therefore, it has been suggested that in order to meet the information needs of the rural dwellers of Nigeria, peculiar rural libraries can be designed.

However, before one can talk of functional rural library, the government and the librarians must be ready to do a lot. The government on their part must be able to:

- Have vibrant public libraries that can branch out to rural areas. This according to Ogunjipe (2005) is what is being done in Sierra Leone where provincial libraries are situated in big towns and are made to provide services to other smaller settlements around them through what is known as district libraries.
- Employ qualified librarians that can service the rural areas.
- Acquire and build a rural library on a central expanse of land for a rural or a group of rural communities providing all the needed infrastructure and amenities.
- Maintain and monitor such a rural library so that it does not become a shadow of the original.
- Provide an official van that can be used to convey the rural librarian and information materials that need to be transported from a public library to the rural library. In the riverine area, there should be a decent boat and a paddler

always ready to convey the librarian on almost daily basis if he is not resident in the community.

On the part of the librarian, he

- should be ready not to be too officious or formal;
- must be ready to give a selfless quantitative and qualitative service to the society;
- must also be ready to be an information consultant, broker and counsellor (Ochai, 1995) always being interested in answering the users' questions.

The rural dwellers on their part

- must be responsive to the activities of the government and the rural librarian in order to encourage them to do more for the development of rural libraries;
- they can donate land willingly for the building;
- they can volunteer to paddle the canoe that will convey the librarian in a riverine area; and
- generally speaking, they must make the rural librarian feel wanted by trying as much as possible to make him feel wanted or needed and by avoiding hostility in all its ramifications.

In Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Library Board provides library services for the country on a national scale using provincial and district libraries to reach the rural areas; it also makes use of primary schools as delivery and service points to reach more people in the rural areas; not only that, some other arms of government, like the department of agriculture produce literature like pamphlets, circulars, brochures and notices in the various local languages as well as in English which are distributed to farmers. These literature are simple and contain illustrations which even an illiterate can understand (Ogunjipe, 2005).

Sierra Leone has been able to bring into librarianship innovations to meet the information need of her rural dwellers. The following statement credited to the director of library services of that country in Ogunjipe (2005) is an attestation to this fact

"the service has had a remarkable effect on the young and it has been acclaimed by parents, teachers and visitors" (p. 179).

If the government, librarians and rural people can do all that is expected of them then, the rural areas of Nigeria will boast of rural libraries that are suitable to meet the information needs of the rural; this in turn will help individuals and communities to develop which will further aid the development of the Nation as a whole.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR INCULCATING MORAL VALUES

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INTRODUCTION

Effective maintenance of good moral values in schools has implication for the survival of our existence as a nation but in recent years, there has been a general outcry in the nation that the standards of morals has falling. The situation is so alarming that not a day passes without some media report of students unrest, vandalism, leakages or examination malpractices like the just concluded West Africa Examinations, Youth revolt against constituted authority and proliferation of secret cult and clandestine societies in schools. Educationists have been more concerned with the deteriorating state of morals and values in the institutions of learning because education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but includes bringing about a desirable change in the learner. The concern of the educationist is therefore not misplaced.

It must be said, however, that the standard of morals in our nation has deteriorated for sometime now, a fact that is attested to by several social programmes instituted by successive governments with the aim of bringing about positive changes in our value system. These social programmes include Ethical Revolution instituted by the Shehu Shagari Administration in the second Republic, in 1984. War Against Indiscipline launched under the Muhammed Buhari regime, followed by Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) under the Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida administration. In 1994, Sanni Abacha regime also launched its War Against Indiscipline and corruption. The present regime of president Olusegun Obasanjo since its inauguration in May 29 1999 has been battling with national Rebirth and Economic Reform. All these governments apart from recognizing that concerted effort needs to be made to arrest the situation also realized that the focal point and the centre stage of inculcating morals and values is the school hence, these social reform programmes were launched in schools as well as the entire country.