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Journal of the Nigerian Library Association
Ogun State Chapter

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EDITORIAL

This issue of the Gateway Library Journal features ten full length articles spanning different aspects of issues affecting the library and information science profession. The authors came from different backgrounds ranging from university libraries to the national library.

The lead article is by Adebika who assessed the operational efficiency of library application software in use in some Nigerian university libraries with a view to assisting librarians in determining which software package to adopt. In their own article, Ajayi and Akinniyi took a look at the impact of the Internet on book loans at Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, while Mrs. Adebowale did a contents analysis of the *'Lagos Journal of Library and Information Science'* - the successor title to the *'Lagos Librarian'*.

The issue of effective communication in staff administration in Nigerian university libraries is the concern of Ebinuwele and Yaya. The article explored the different means of staff communication and made some far reaching recommendations. Osaniyi and Olorunsola on their own part described a recent restructuring exercise carried out at the Library of Redeemer's University and challenged other university libraries to closely look into their systems with a view to re-invigorating their services. Still on university libraries, Sanni highlighted the challenges and prospects of developing strong university libraries in Nigeria.

Oduwale and Okorie assessed the issue the millennium development goals (MDGs) and how it could be used in achieving the set goals. On her own part, Bosah studied the effects of mutilation of library materials using Delta State University as a case study while Ojebode looked at library funding and collection development in two Nigerian colleges of education. Finally, Makinde took a didactic look at the library connection in the liberation of Nigeria citizens from the scourge of illiteracy.

Another interesting feature of this edition of GLJ is the significant presence of female professionals who made up 50% of the contributors. We hope that this trend will continue.

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LITERACY FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE: THE LIBRARY CONNECTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper observes that current definitions of literacy show that literacy is the foundation of human development and it permeates all aspects of life. Thus for anyone to grow proportionally in all areas of knowledge needed for human development, one must be literate. The paper goes on to show that the library is an important input needed to achieve the feat of human development which includes human liberation. Recommendations are made on what could be done by individuals, families, organizations and governments at various levels to help people become literate, grow in literacy level and become liberated from the shackles of various woes that plague the human society.

INTRODUCTION

Going by the definitions of various scholars like Oyedeji (1997) March and Fuller (1999) among others, it has been observed by Makinde (2007) that literacy has various levels. Eguare (2006) also observes that the concept of literacy is elastic when it comes to defining it. From simply being the ability to read and write it has come to include the skill of computing and other wide range of experiences that symbolize and represent meanings through nonverbal communication and other skills. Ezeokoli (2002) in discussing the scope of literacy states that literacy is not static and it can be safely said that the conception and scope of literacy grows with the advancement of technology. However, Otto and Ford in Eguare (2006) expects that the skills imparted by literacy be used as tools for obtaining information and expressing one's own thoughts.

Literacy aids some other experiences and processes in life like learning, being knowledgeable, confident and self-reliant. It also helps in taking the right decision in various circumstances and generally speaking, it helps one to make meaning of the world.

Thus it is glaring that literacy is necessary for individual development in that it helps to be freed from the world of ignorance, poverty, inability to take the right decision, not being able to make meaning of one's environment, sickness, untimely death, unemployment, broken homes, oppression at various levels and failures in different areas of life. This is in agreement with Nyerere (1979) in Pernede (2005) who states that self-reliance is the

basis for development which leads to progress that impact on people's lives. Such positive impact leads to liberation from various unpleasant situations and circumstances.

LITERACY AND LIBERATION

From this discussion on literacy, it is very clear that there is a relationship between literacy and liberation. It can also be deduced that if literacy aid certain basic life experiences like learning, then it starts from childhood, continues throughout life and paves the way for emerging literacies (Ezeokoli, 2002).

At every stage of life literacy helps the individual to be freed from the shackles of ignorance and its attendant woes. A child that is knowledgeable about his environment knows what is acceptable and unacceptable to some extent; he reads about the feats of others before him, seeks to attain their standard or surpass their achievements. Thus, such a child grows up to be liberated from the lower wrung of economic and social ladder to be among the great achievers in his society.

As an adult, such an individual who is literate reasons well to a great extent going by the amount of information at his disposal and is able to arrive at taking logical decision most of the times even if some of them fail him some of the times. Through literacy, he is able to know and work towards getting good employment which serves as a source of livelihood that will free him from poverty. Not only that, those who are literate have the opportunity to read and know about their environment, causes of certain illnesses and diseases. Thus, such people try as much as possible to guard against or prevent such ailments and are therefore freed from constant sickness and untimely death to a great extent. The literate person also knows his right as an individual in the family, an employee, a member of a community and a citizen of a country. Thus, he cannot be cheated or denied his right. Therefore, such a person has been exposed to know the truth that sets one free from all forms of oppression.

Obuasi (2006) observes that people need access to the government and governance. Therefore, at societal level there is the need for every community to be liberated from various forms of oppression and deprivation like lack of infrastructures and social amenities like good roads, schools, security, electricity, good water supply, employment opportunities among others. Lacking these or some of them means the society cannot function as it should, the result of which will be underdevelopment or lack of any form of development. Such a condition spells doom for the members of the community who will be wallowing in

abject poverty and untimely death in certain cases. However, if members of such community are literate, they will know what to do in order to prevent, minimize or be totally liberated from the grip of the two great evils of oppression and deprivation.

A nation that is being ruled by colonialists needs liberation from the foreign intruders who are oppressors in most cases. A nation that is being ruled by a tyrant who might be a citizen of such a nation also needs liberation. There is need for a country to be liberated from corrupt leadership and those leaders who do not have understanding of what they are doing and those who tend to lose focus. Those countries or nations that have been subjected to the misfortune of being led by the various groups of bad leadership have nationals who suffer the pangs of hardship such as being downtrodden, lack of employment, being underpaid, being unnecessarily incarcerated, lack of infrastructure and social amenities, lack of maintenance and poor funding where some of these infrastructure and amenities already exist.

However, the presence of literate people in some of these countries has been the saving grace. These literate ones will make the outside world to see the evil of colonialism and call for sympathy and help from other nations. For example in South Africa under colonial rule, literate people like Nelson Mandela among others cried to the outside world while they also fought the colonial masters with all their might. In some other countries, the literate people will sensitize the masses to rise up and fight against oppression through guerilla wars having read about their successes in other places.

At other times, war against leadership oppression had simply been won through the pen, that is, various literate people writing to criticize bad leadership. There is the example of Nigeria during the era of a military junta. Various human rights organizations consisting of literate people sensitized the masses to resist this self imposition on the people. Such groups include the National Democratic Coalition Organisation (NADECO) and Oodua People's Congress (OPC).

Other groups also sprang up at various times to sensitize the people on certain anomalies in governance like the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Movement for the Actualization of the State of Biafra (MASOB) and Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). The people involved in these groups are certainly very literate.

Thus it is glaring that literacy is needed in order for one to be liberated as

an individual. A community needs it and it is also needed for national liberation where oppression and corruption exist. However, it should be noted that the level of literacy determines the extent to which one can make meaning out of one's environment. This in turn determines one's height in life and the extent of being liberated from unpleasant and unwanted circumstances. Therefore, there is need for individuals to be literate in order to progress in life. Communities and nations need literate people in order to develop and take their places among leading developed nations of the world. In order to achieve this, help is needed from establishments that help to get people informed.

MASS LITERACY EFFORTS IN NIGERIA

In appreciation of the fact that literacy which is part and parcel of education is needed for the emancipation of people of all races in the world from the grips of various social, economic and political problems, governments at various levels in Nigeria introduced compulsory education for the Nigerian people. It was introduced in Western Nigeria as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1952 and in Eastern Nigeria in 1957 (Fafunwa, 1974 in Archunmolase 2001) while it was launched by the Federal Government in 1976 (Bamisaye 1992 in Archunmolase 2001).

However, as there was the need to take compulsory education to a higher level, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched on 29th September, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto, Sokoto State. This is an educational reform programme of the Nigerian Government that provides free, compulsory and three years of junior secondary education for all school-aged children in Nigeria. The three components of the UBE programme are: early childhood care and development education, six year primary education and three years of JSS education (UBEC 2006).

Going by the levels of education involved in the UBE programme, it is very glaring that its attention is directed at the formative years of the learner's personality development. Therefore, adequate management and necessary in-outs must be ensured in order for the programme to achieve the desired goal of having literate people who can develop their potentials, become self sustaining and useful members of the society and who have been liberated from various shades of life problems. For this noble goal to be achieved, the library which is the 'heart beat', 'nerve centre' and 'life wire' of education cannot be left out of the programme.

THE LIBRARY CONNECTION

It has been mentioned that for individuals, communities and nations to be liberated from various unpleasant and unwanted circumstances in life which includes poor health, poverty, ignorance and some other socio-economic problems, literacy is needed. This is in agreement with Street (2006) who states that literacy helps one to become more critical, self aware and in control of his/her destiny. Literacy, thus, brings knowledge which comes through information. Therefore, for anyone to be well informed as an individual and for a community or nation to boast of knowledgeable populace that will aid development, there is the need to consult the storehouse of information, the powerhouse of intellectual activities, which is the library.

There is need for every society to introduce its citizens to the use of library and encourage them to sustain the habit of using the library. Little children can be taken to school or public libraries where they can listen to stories being read out to them, watch educative video clips and read children's books as they grow.

By the time they get to tertiary institutions, the grown ups should be able to access information in the library independently and get the optimum benefits from it, having been exposed to the relevant library skills. This will help their all round development in life as they will be attaining further literacy, which will lead to lifelong literacy which in turn will pave way for other emerging literacies (Ezeokoli, 2002).

Such a person who is exposed to knowledge and wisdom and understanding in almost every sphere of life will be liberated from a lot of misfortunes as he has information to prevent them, face them and solve many life's problems and challenges. He thus moves on in life to abundant bliss brought about by literacy.

A society that is populated by literate people is freed to a great extent from internal and external oppression. Such groups of people know their rights. As citizens of a country, they go on to challenge various shades of tyranny by demanding for their rights and they get involved in creative activities that will help to make the society more comfortable for almost everyone.

However a lot of efforts need to be put in if the people of Nigeria are to be liberated from various economic and socio-political problems through literacy. Among other things, contributions involving provision of libraries must be made by governments, communities, organisations and

individuals. The following recommendations are therefore preferred.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Every family should endeavour to have a library of their own so that children can be exposed to the world of books as early as possible in order to help build and sustain their literacy.

Government at various levels should site libraries in all communities including the grassroots to expose people to information that will help them to be liberated from their various problems.

At present, most public primary and secondary schools in Nigeria with the exception of Federal Government Colleges do not have libraries while some schools at best have reading rooms without books and libraries. As the Federal Government expend capital resources on teachers and buildings for the UBE programme, working libraries with all the necessary human and materials resources must be sited in all the public primary and secondary schools if we must have qualitative education for the Nigerian masses beginning from the formative years in view of the fact that the library aids individual learning a lot.

Not only that, all academic institutions from primary to tertiary level should have libraries and the skills of using the library by way of library education should be imparted to the users so that their literacy can grow and help them to take various useful decisions that will help them to prevent, face and solve life's problems and misfortunes as they present themselves.

Individuals too must make concerted efforts to get literate by using the information contained in libraries to enable them get very knowledgeable about various opportunities and rights that will enable them to be liberated from various woes like sickness, poverty and oppression among others.

Also it will not be out of place for other organizations like banks, manufacturing companies, oil companies and some other big companies to stock information materials about other fields of life apart from their special collections so that their staff can read widely and get more knowledgeable day-in-day out so as to be better individuals and better workers who are well informed to be liberated from personal problems and well armed to face organizational challenges.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it can be clearly seen that if individuals, communities and nations are to be liberated from oppression of various

types, there is need for literacy which aids information since information is power (Olaofe, 1997) as it sets free from the bounds of ignorance which is the source of a lot of human problems. In fact, literacy can be said to be a source of gratification to mankind as it is noble, rich, invaluable and it can influence, control and change the various aspects of the life of an individual or a society (Olaofe, 1997).

The library on its own part plays a great role in making people knowledgeable through the information it contains. Thus, it can be safely concluded that literacy aids human liberation and the library helps literacy to grow thus helping liberation too. In fact, it is a cycle that goes on and on for the good of humanity.

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