

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN THE PROMOTING NIGERIAN CULTURE

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Abstract

The paper examines the roles of libraries and librarians in the promotion of Nigerian culture. It argues that the roles played by libraries and their staff in the preservation and promotion of Nigeria's culture are not well understood and appreciated by Nigerians, hence the motivation and justification for the article. The paper adopted a qualitative approach to research and analyzed data gathered from secondary sources thematically. Drawing lessons from all kinds of libraries, the paper revealed that libraries and other stakeholders in the society have been instrumental in preserving and providing the widest possible access to knowledge on culture. Through this role, libraries and stakeholders have helped to foster an environment where diverse cultural expressions are encouraged, valued, shared, and protected in Nigerian society. It concludes by recommending that the Nigerian government should address the challenges facing libraries in this regard with a view to enhancing their roles in promoting Nigerian culture.

Key Words: Culture, Librarian, Library,

INTRODUCTION

Globally, libraries play a vital role in a nation by preserving its cultural heritage. In the modern age with the abundance of information, libraries assist society by maintaining and disseminating relevant information as and when required. Librarians and libraries have been playing vital roles in Nigerian society as Centre's for imparting knowledge, as hubs for human interaction and will continue to be relevant in present-day Nigeria as a means of dissemination of valuable information that will enhance the development of our cultural heritage, economically, socially and otherwise. Libraries in Nigeria have been at the forefront of our community. The library is the heart of the community where they reach out to all the citizens in person and online. It connects people to the entire world of ideas and information in the areas of their desire.

Libraries are major sources of information for society and they serve as guardians to the public access to information. Oghenekaro in Unegbu and Amanze (2016) stated that it is the duty of librarians to ensure that users access the information they need regardless of age education, ethnicity, language, economic status, physical limitations or geographical barriers as the digital world continues to evolve.

Nigeria as a society has long recognized the important place of culture and the country is passionate

and committed to the preservation and promotion of her cultural heritage, as it is well established that for a society to be societal it must be cultural. Oyegbade (2019) agreed that the culture and tradition of the people are their identities as it affords them due recognition. Societies in the whole world have various and divergent cultures which they cherish, and practice and would do everything possible within their reach to ensure that such cultures are preserved and promoted for generations yet unborn because the loss of their language and culture is the lost identity.

To ascertain the importance of culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by the people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing the people from their neighbours. The Federal Government of Nigeria launched a cultural policy for Nigeria in 1988. Cultural policy for Nigeria was specifically spelled out the objectives of the cultural policy as follows:

1. The policy shall serve to mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness.
2. To promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our tradition and values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and the dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values.
3. The policy shall promote creativity in the fields of arts, science and technology, ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updating to serve modern development needs of as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas.
4. That States shall recognize that libraries play a crucial role in the promotion of cultural heritage etc.

In light of the above, the libraries in Nigeria have been empowered to promote and preserve all forms of Nigeria culture not minding the type of library or libraries are saddled with the responsibility of developing and organizing collection of books and journals including print and electronic materials as well as websites and all other types of information resources that can serve the needs of all groups. It is against this background the paper seeks to examine or discusses the roles of librarians, libraries other stakeholders in promotion of Nigeria culture. Hence there are forces fighting against our culture that requires an urgent attention to avoid Nigeria's culture going extinction.

As sound cultural policy can be a determinant of how best the cultural elements can be used as a means for her country's domestic and foreign policies.

For the purpose of clear understanding of the paper there is a need to discuss some of the conceptual key terms used.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

LIBRARY

In a world without libraries would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world's cumulative knowledge and heritage for the future generation WIPO magazine (2012) states that libraries represent different things to different people. It is seen as a place where mothers can take toddlers to read their first stories and students can study, it allow anyone to borrow a book, access the internet or do research. Libraries offer a means by which we can gain access to knowledge. According to UNESCO in library and information services academic blog (LIBD BD Network 2014) defines library as, "any organization collection of printed books and periodical or another graphic or audio visual materials with a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required to meet the information research, educational and recreational needs of users". Library is an organized collection of books and other materials such materials may include magazines, newspapers, maps, films, compact discs, computer systems and other printed electronics and multimedia resources. Dahunsi in Unegbu(2019) defined Libraries as a repository of recorded knowledge and a Centre where information resources are selected, acquired, organized preserved and disseminated. It is a reservoir of information to all institutions from where both staffs and students tap to survive mentally, physically, socially and spiritually.

LIBRARIAN

A librarian according to Wikipedia (2020) is a person who works personally in a library, providing access to information and sometimes social or technical programming to users. Traditionally, a librarian is associated with collections of books and non-materials. It stressed the role of a librarian as continually evolving to meet social and technological needs. A modern librarian may deal with provision and maintenance of information in many formats including books, electronic resources, magazines, newspapers, audio and video recordings, maps, manuscripts etc. Esther George A in Unegbu, (2019) defined Librarian as person trained in Library and information service and is engaged in Library services and operations to provide access to information as well as to render other assistance to library users. As the services of libraries vary, especially in a modern era, so are the types of librarians who work in the library. Librarian performs the following roles, provision of information resources, provision of services to users, conduction of Librarians education and management of library resources. They are saddled with major responsibility of providing information resources to the entire society at large without discrimination.

CULTURE

Researchers and scholars from different fields have different definitions of culture. According to Louis and Wapmuk (2020) said culture is as old as mankind, yet its meaning has remained a subject of debate among scholars. Culture is a complex concept which influences virtually every aspect of our lives. It comprises of elements such as history, religion, language, traditions values, beliefs and customs. It is instilled early in life but is constantly evolving. Zemmermann, (2017) defined culture as encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what

we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things. On the other hand Ali, (2003) noted that culture is an instrument of diplomacy which can be utilized to promote and propagate Nigeria interest and ensure the liberation of Africa which is the Centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Culture is an effective tool for building and enhancing friendly relationship with other countries, it also promotes peace and positive image of the country.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR PROMOTING NIGERIA CULTURE BY LIBRARIANS AND LIBRARIES

The need for the preservation and promotion of Nigeria culture cannot be overemphasized. Oyetimi et- al (2020) argued that culture is a key part of national consciousness of the people which should not be discarded for whatever reasons because successful democracies are said to be built on historical experiences that are peculiar to individual nation. The fact that Nigeria's culture is gradually going on extinction is no longer a hidden fact, every well-meaning and patriotic Nigeria's are lamenting that something urgent should be done to revive the Cultural heritage of the country. Scholars and researchers of different category are already worried of what is happening to our cherished and rich culture. Nwegbu, et al in Nwoalikpe (2013) argued that the dominance of Western products in country possess a threat to our cultural identity. Similarly Ibrahim in Anyaoku(2012) opined that globalization is having a devastating effect on African and indeed Nigerian culture, which has already been subjected to decades of desecration. Activities of Western explorers, missionaries, traders and colonial administrators have resulted in the loss of respect for our traditional institutions and heritage. He stressed that in the time past there was joy in communal living in village settings with culturally rich entertainment, with our talking drums and other musical instruments but today it has been replaced by piano and so on. Nwoalikpe (2013) occurred that globalization in some ways has affected the culture of our states as a result of the creation of International free market. He stated categorically that globalization has a devastating effect on African and indeed Nigerian culture on the basis that our youths only focus more on the Internet and telecommunication for entertainment than our cultural values. Our youths are gradually rejecting our foods, music, art and language, even the pronunciation of words, communal lifestyle, eating together, sharing problems together, relating collectively, some rich cultural heritage such as marriage rites, burial rites, dressing, greetings, folklore, religion, are not only gradually fading away but have died due to Western cultural influence. Lamenting on the decline Babawale the former boss of Centre for Black and African Arts and Centre expressed his concern over the incursion of Western culture and its rape of the African and Nigeria's cultural values. Many patriotic Nigeria is disturbed because the loss of value leads to the loss of identity. As quoted in his lamentation as thus:

History and experience of the parts of the world as witnessed in Europe America and Asia have shown that countries that allow their culture to be the springboard of what they do, experience development faster than those that don't. The problem with us is that we are taking everything while jettisoning everything that is African, without giving anything

back to other cultures. It is now erroneously believed by the youths in Africa and in Nigeria, that Westernization is synonymous with civilization, whereas it is absolutely wrong

Discussing further, the extinction of our culture Samuel, and Chimeziem, (2009) stated that Nigeria's Culture is related to languages gradually giving way to English, French, German, Arabic and even Chinese to the detriment of our local languages, this is based on the fact that language remains the most important traditional value which people are identified with and even respected for, and very important vehicle for the Promotion of culture. In this same vein, scholars and researchers like Ohiri-Aniche in Punch (2016) and Nwajiuba in Nigerian Tribune (2019) poured out their heartbreaking that culture and language are intertwined and closely related as one cannot be separated from each other; hence language reflects the culture of its speaker. Once a particular culture is being regarded as outdated, the language begins to decline. Since language is an important part of any society because it enables people to communicate and express themselves. When a language dies out, future generations lose an important aspect of the culture that necessary to complete how culture is understood. According to Samuel and Chimeziem (2009) stated that Promotion of culture entails providing avenues to ensure cultural education, consciousness and development as the culture is disseminated in its bid to allow public accessibility through various strategies such as films/videos, theatre, music, food, dressing, exhibition, sports, seminars, workshops and publications. Promotion of our culture in the international arena can be a powerful tool for development, with community wide, social, economic and environmental benefits. Oscar, (2016) asserted that culture ensure unity during crisis, influences identity, peace and reconciliation. He stressed that culture is one of the main pillars to development and sustenance of communities and no society can progress in its absence.

Furthermore, cultural diversity is a tool for development, as development has no single strategy for any particular country or culture in achieving her developmental policies

In line with the present reality and governments efforts in diversifying the Nigeria economy and Promotion of non-oil sector of the economy as dependence on oil can no longer sustain the economy, we have to turn to our tourism, cultural industry and explore, grow, to develop and promote market and generally leverage the country's arts and crafts sector to enhance Nigeria achieve optimal empowerment for her people especially the rural populace. And will also enhance a source of high revenue generation to the country.

Lastly, Promotion of Nigeria cultural heritage abroad will boost the economy; create employment for our teaming youths in sports entertainments etc.

STRATEGIES AND INSTITUTIONS FOR PROMOTION OF NIGERIA'S CULTURE

Having established the reasons why Nigeria's Culture needs to be preserved and promoted globally, it becomes very important that we consider some practicable Strategies that can be employed to promote and foster development. In doing this we will examine the various roles of different stakeholders in society that can promote and preserve our culture.

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

There is a popular saying that goes thus, “catch them young” this according to the Holy Bible ‘train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it’. Going by this statement which means the responsibility of educating the children about their cultural values should begin from their childhood. The parents has a vital role to play in ensuring that they impact into their children cultural values, norms, which will begin from first of all teaching or talking to them with their mother tongue ensuring that they understand their own language, how to greet, respect the elders in the society and their traditions.

THE ROLE OF A TEACHER LIBRARIAN

Teachers are the next to the children after their parents. They spent most of their time with the teachers and as a result they understand the place of the society where they are. The role of teachers in promoting cultural diversities is immeasurable as their primary target is to impact into the children and youths under their domain, the need to preserve and promote the fundamental acceptable national cultural values, attitudes and model behavior that will enhance good relationship. This they do through a well-structured and designed classroom instructional strategy for sensitizing cultural awareness in the learner. According to Dan (2008) the strategies include field trips, the process where the teachers will carry the students out for visitations to other parts of the country to see areas of interest’s resources and culture available in other parts of Nigeria. They can also emphasis on cultural studies by exploring the enrichment of their instruction with Nigeria’s cultural values, ethics, histories and philosophies. Teachers engage students in cultural activities by allowing them to organize cultural exhibitions, which will show case different Nigeria’s cultures in terms of food types, dressing, dancing, social activities and crafts.

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS/RULERS:

Traditional institutions are deep core of the culture as traditional rulers are the custodian of the people’s culture. Indeed traditional rulers are an enduring part of the cultural heritage due to their critical role as the custodian of culture and tradition. Oyetimi et-al (2020) stated that the office of traditional rulers plays a vital role in maintaining peace. This is as a result of their strategic position they are occupying in maintaining of law and order in their respective domains. They are responsible for preserving the cultural heritages of local places. They organize yearly festivals that show cases the cultural essence of the community by bringing countries together under one roof to strengthen the love they have for each other. The recent example is the one that was held in 2019 and organized by His royal majesty Oba Adeye E O Ooni of Ife who organized an open exhibitions of 60(sixty) artifacts sourced from Ife and other Mobile Museum of the Brazilian consulate in Lagos. According to Abubakar (2019) who reported that he marked the celebration of Brazilian Independence Day. The exhibition which the Ooni tagged “treasure of our ancestors” show cased with dance and music which attract prominent Yoruba leaders, historians, lovers of arts, history and culture. Also intendance was Mr. Helgas Bandeira, Brazilian consulate general in Lagos along with a huge number of the Brazilian community residents in Nigeria. The celebration was described as Brazilian and Yoruba

independence. The essence is to promote the cultural and diplomatic relationship between the two countries which demonstrated to young Nigerians of past and present relationship to those that were ignorant of their various cultural artifacts. While the most recent one was hosted by Ebira nation cultural heritage known as the Igu-Kotonkarfe fishing festival in Kogi State held in March 31, 2022, attracted prominent son and daughters of the kingdom dignitaries and special guest from outside the State, including traditional rulers, community leader, village chiefs/district heads and a foreigner from Syria to grace the occasion as reported by Abukbakar (2022).

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

There are government agencies/institutions that their core mandates is to preserve and promote Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage within the country and outside the world in order to ensure that our culture is kept alive. These agencies includes, National Festival of arts and Culture (NAFEST); National Council of arts and Culture (NCAC); International Arts and Crafts (INAC); National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO); Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAA) and many others whose statutory goal and objectives is to holds seminars, conferences, workshops, public lectures, exhibitions, symposia, annual festivals etc. which is geared towards creating public awareness among Nigerians and non-Nigerians to market the beauty of Nigeria's cultural diversities among the youths, students, stakeholders, prominent Nigerians foreign diplomats from time to time to foster peaceful co-existence and sustainable development in the country. These institutions have been carrying out activities and programs that promote the overall image of black African peoples and our cultures to be appreciated globally. For instance, as part of the mandate of agencies, such as National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), NACA, NAFEST etc. held programs that is targeted towards the youths, children students in secondary school and tertiary institutions called cultural clubs to foster cross-cultural interaction among the youths to appreciate, encourage Nigeria languages, dress cuisines, cultural dances to also discover and expose young talents in cultural and creative arts. Hence the activities of the centers were to expose the beauty of our cultures and others by organizing festivals like the Argungu Fishing festival which has grown to become a global cultural events and carnival e.g. Calabar carnival and others has also become a major tourist attraction in Nigeria drawing participants from all over the world. Reports of such occasions are abound as reported by Wale (2021), during one of the event of INAC and NAFEST expo was used to launch the international diplomacy for peace between Nigeria and Trinidad and Tabago where the ambassador dressed in Nigeria (Northern) attire making him to look like someone from Sokoto State. It is also on record where the researcher works at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs Lagos while marking her 60 (sixty) years anniversary activities in October 2021, invited the Indian ambassador to Nigeria to the celebration and His Excellency came to grace the occasion with her cultural dancers to display their various kinds of dance at the NIIA Lecture Theatre which was a display to strengthen the diplomatic ties between Nigeria and India government.

THE ROLES OF AMBASSADORS

As a true representatives of their country, they play a very vital role in promotion of their country's

cultural activities through the following medium; by dressing in their cultural attires that portraits the image of the Nigeria; they should decorate their offices environment with the various artifacts representing ethnic cultures of the country; they can also organize seminars, competitions, workshops etc. from time to time in the countries of residence to talk and discuss on issues that can create awareness, promotion and preservation of their culture and languages. The ambassadors can volunteer to teach his /her language at the local school. They can collaborate with home librarians to translate their local languages of the country where they are serving. They can organize annual events that will carry an extensive exhibitions that will show case the various forms of arts crafts, such as dance, foods, dresses, etc. of their country especially during their yearly anniversary.

THE ROLES OF NIGERIANS IN DIASPORA

Nigerians citizen in diaspora are highly talented, skilled and creative in various ways. They can use such talent to promote our culture in the place of their residence by organizing programs such as cultural days, events, exhibitions and write up that can promote Nigeria image abroad. As stated by Asobele(2002) that the greatest cultural ambassador of any country are its citizens: Nigerian businessmen, artists, writers, government, functionaries, Nigerian tourist, performers, musicians, athletes, professors, students etc. all have a vital role to play in promoting culture abroad. The most recent example is a lady from Edo State, a writer, by name Nekpen Obasogie based in Canada has been promoting Nigeria culture (especially Benin culture). She is the author of ‘Great Benin: The Alcazar of Post-Colonial Culture’ and ‘The Life of Princess Adesuwa’ the best –selling book of Benin folk stories, that has another global attention by putting Benin folk stories before International community. According to the reporter Oliomogbe(2022) that she got an award in Los Angeles, United State and had in attendance, of Mrs. Abike Dairi-Erewa, the Presidential Assistant on Diaspora Affairs and good number of other eminent Nigerians. He described the royal award given irrespective of tribe, tongue and religion to her as a Nigerian citizen in the diaspora have distinguish her talents to help humanity and promote African cultural heritage to the world through her creativity and personality. He stated that lady Obasogie is also a founder of NEBO TV in Canada NEBO TV Magazine that anchors her programs.

EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS:

Educational exchange programs have been the bedrock and cornerstone on which cultural relations between Nigeria and the outside world rest upon. According to Ogbeyi (2013) noted that the program became more noticeable and acceptable, especially during the decade of the 1960s when most African countries achieved political independence. He stated that the program serves as a media for culture contact and cultural diffusion which invariably leads to better understanding of each other’s cultures.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA HOUSES

Modern communication particularly the radio and television aided by satellite broadcasting has brought the world to our living room not only doorstep. Electronic media is a powerful means of selling our culture to the world through their various programs which can be weekly or daily. The

media houses have been playing important roles in transmitting Nigeria's culture within and outside the country. These can be done by slotting our different cultural heritage from the different ethnic groups in their stations. A popular example is the kind that the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria has been engaged since 1980s, where it has a program tagged Tales by Moonlights which is highly enjoyed by children and youths. All that the media houses needs today is to ensure they intensify their broadcast on our diverse cultures within Nigeria and outside

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTION OF NIGERIA CULTURE

They play a vital roles as they have the mandate of harnessing all the activities of the stakeholders and agencies mentioned above ensuring that their products in inform of films recorded video, books etc. Are collected, organized and preserved for future generation. In nut shell their major roles can be summarized in the following points

COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE.

The first and foremost role of libraries and librarians in promotion of our culture is ensure they collect all relevant materials related to various cultural heritage of different ethnic groups in Nigeria into their individual libraries. This simply means that librarians should be focus on the collecting cultural and artistic materials in their communities starting from the traditional rulers/institution and other agencies that are in custodian of cultural records, artifacts and archival materials for proper documentation in their stocks that will allow the researchers and public access as they carry their studies.

ORGANIZING TALKS, LECTURES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP.

They organize talks and other medium that are very crucial in order to promote and preserve our culture. The librarian brainstorm regularly using the medium to create awareness among the youths and children in order to make them cherish our rich culture. They educate the citizens especially the youths and children from time to time as this will be the quickest means of creating awareness and awaking the youths and promoting our culture. They also carryout sensitization programs in their communities

EXHIBITION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND COLLABORATIONS

Exhibition and collaboration is an essential tools with which the librarians uses to advertise their services and resources. The display include book fair, disk, video tapes, cassette, films of various cultural activities in their custody to draw the attention of the public thereby creating awareness of the country's cultural heritage. Also librarians can collaborate with each other through their various bodies and association such as Nigerian Library Association (NLA), African Library and Information Association and Institutions (AFLIA). International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA), And United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) etc. Hence one of their aims is to fostering intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity with their various countries.

DIGITIZATION OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The libraries of all type should be aiming to digitize their materials. As no library can remain relevant in the present dispensations if their materials are not digitize. Digitization will allow the general public, students, researchers and youths all over the world to have unrestricted access to our rich cultural diversity the libraries in Nigeria anytime anywhere. It will also enable librarians preserve and promote our culture through various platforms on social media handles.

MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING NIGERIA CULTURE

Libraries and librarians in ensuring to carry out their roles in promoting Nigeria's culture are not without challenges. Among the various problems they face, the major are; poor funding, lack of adequate support by government, harsh economic situation, lack of training among library personnel, high cost of infrastructure etc.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that our culture doesn't go on extinction there should an urgent need to revive the dying minority languages because of their importance to the cultural value of Nigeria. Our leaders and policy makers must wake up from their slumber by ensuring and supporting the preservation and Promotion of cultural property whether of concrete or non- concrete nature, past or present, written or orally, relating to values for facts of history.

The federal government must "awake" the national language policy to prevent the minority language from going extinction and encourage parents to educate their children in their indigenous language. The government should implement the Cultural Policy of Nigerian (1988) which was meant to prevent the sweeping away of our rich cultural heritage. That may result in disorderly change and societal instability and eventually creation of a people completely cut off from its cultural roots.

Also as a matter of urgency the federal government should evoke the part nine (9) section two (2) and subsection (9.2.1) of the cultural policy for Nigeria that States shall recognize language as an important aspect of culture as a vehicle for cultural expression and transmission by ensuring that at least two Nigerian languages is thought in our schools

The Federal Government should adequately fund libraries.

Finally, librarians should look outside the box for partnership and donor agents within and outside the country

CONCLUSION

The need for the preservation and promotion of our culture within and outside the country cannot be over emphasized, without culture and language our identity will be lost, It is very important we promote our culture more especially among youths in the global world to avoid Nigeria's culture going on extinction. Promotion our culture will also create employment opportunity for the youths, boost our economy and thereby enhance peace and unity.

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