THE P LACE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NATIONALINTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The library is an important institution in designing the establishment of an information policy since it has the expertise as an information provider. This paper seeks to investigate the role of public libaries in national integration. The public library should give the public equitable access to political, economic and social information using various electronic, social and print media platfirms at their disposal. Such political information should include voters rights, elections schedule, among others, should be done with the intention to increase political participation and awareness. This free and equitable access to information will enable Individuals Bridge the gap in the knowledge which will enhance their political participation, economic development and invariably spurs national integration. The major challenges identified were inadequate fund, manpower, power supply, lack of e-library, among others. It is recommended that Publie Libraries should strive to acquire Information resources both in print and electronic format on social, economic, political and educational development that are current and rekvant to making the communities to be literate and public libaries need to be adquately supported and funded by government and none governmental agencies in the country.

Keywords: Library, Public Library and National Integration.

Introduction

National integration is crucial to the development of every nation. For any meaningful society to advance and flourish it must embrace national integration. The idea behind national integration is simply unity, oneness not minding all our differences as a people. In other words, it's unity in diversity. To foster this unity, it requires a corporate effort of all concerned if the goal or objectives must be achieved in any country and Nigeria in particular. Egbefo (2015) maintains that national integration remains the cardinal objective of every multi-ethnic nation. National integration is a conscious process of creating an interlocking and vertical

relationship between and among hitherto separate nations, after an understanding and reconciliation of the fundamental differences and an establishment of an acceptable consensus (Folarin, Olanrewaju & Ajayi, 2014).

National integration is coming to the knowledge, belief and acceptance that the citizens have a common nationality. National Integration is referred to as a process as well as a goal by which all the people inhabiting a particular territory irrespective of their religious, ethnic and linguistic differences, on the basis of certain shared traditions, experiences, common history and values strive to live together forever with honour and dignity (Vyas, 1993). National integration according to Tersoo and Ejue (2014) is the building of a nation state out of disparate socio-economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements which translate the diffuse and unorganized sentiment of nationalism into spirit of citizenship through the creation of policy and programme that are in line with the citizenry.

From the above, it is seen that national integration centres on unity, peaceful coexistence and harmony within a community or locality leaving behind their differences. This in turn creates room for development in all spheres of life. This is why Temitayo, Audu & Lukman (2014) are of the view that national integration is a process and a goal where different communities live together harmoniously by forgoing a common identity that is shared between communities.

The word 'library' comes from 'liber', the latin word for "book". The library has collection of books and other information materials made available to users for reading, studying and references (Akpan, Agam & Bassey, 2018). Robinson (2005) defines a library as an institution that manages the intellectual products that individual can gain access readily. Iyanda and Salawu (2006) on the other hand sees library as a building, an instructional and self-development centre, which operates as an integral part of the environment.

The present age is called information age and it is merely not possible to keep track with improvement activities in the non-appearance of a reliable library and information system in a developing country. An effective library system is an essential requirement for research and development in every field of study. Scientists and researchers need to know about the information tools and resources available for better utilization of information. Failure to provide accurate and adequate information to the target groups may perhaps lead to defective results which will, in turn, hinder national development.

Public libraries as community service organisations exist to provide and give access and services in order to meet the various information needs of the people of the host community and general public for free irrespective of their race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status, and educational attainment.

According to International Federation of Liberty Association (IFLA, 2001), users of public libraries include children, young adults, adults, people with special needs like those with hearing and visual impairment, prisoners, the aged, nursing mothers, organizations and people in government. Public library in its role has provided a platform where people irrespective of their diversity can unite as a result of the change-oriented information thereby helping to fostering national integration for development (Department of the Environment, Community and Loca! Government, Dublin, 2013).

Therefore, the library as a social oriented institution with the goal of providing information for dissemination becomes increasingly important in the role to foster national integration for development. Library as a concept is charged with the collection, availability and accessibility of information necessary for effective and efficient use by its host community and the society at large. Solad je & Ogurumodede (2015) are of the view that the general role of the library is to provide information about its community while its objective is to serve as a centre for information where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance about their environment.

It has been seen or observed that public libraries are indispensable in the role of fostering unity among social, ethnic, cultural, religious and political diversity for national integration for development. There has been scarcity or no literature in the role of public library in national integration for development with reference to the library studied despite several similar studies conducted in different areas. This is a location gap that this study intends to fill. This paper will focuses on the role of public libraries in national integration.

Concept of Public Library

Public library is a social institution which is based on the concept of democracy and it is an institution for the people, by the people and of the people. Pateman and Vincent (2010) defined it as a library owned and maintained by the public of its area for the socialization of its books and kindred materials for free service to the people of the area. The Librarians Glossary in Isabella & Dhanavandan (2014) defines public library as a library provided wholly or partly from ublic funds, and

the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is freely available to all.

The Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science (2011) defines Public Library as a public institution, supported by taxation, one that opens its collections, facilities and services, with distinction to all students. It always strives to meet the information, educational and recreational needs of the community by providing collection and services. Maximum utilization of library resources and services by the users is the main motive of a public library.

The United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) manifesto (2004) defined Public Library as a library established and financed out of public funds. Uwa (2014) outlined the objectives of public library to include: to assemble, preserve and administer books and related educational materials in an organized collection to promote, through guidance and stimulation, the communication of ideas, enlightened citizenship and enriched personal life of the community; to serve the community as a centre of reliable information; to provide opportunity for recreation through the use of literature, music, art forms and internet accessibility; to support educational, civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations, serve continually in order to identify community needs and provide programmes of services to meet such needs; and to corporate with other organizations, agencies and institutions in order to provide programmes or services in order to meet community needs etc.

Information Services Offered by Public Library for National Integration in 21st Century realities.

Access to information is cardinal to national integration. Public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public libraries are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 2010).

However, some of the services provided by the public library as identified by Sokari, Abdullahi & Abdullahi (2017) include information services, outreach programmes, library services to children, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Service (CAS), circulation services, reference services, serial services, consultancy services, research services, photocopying services.

adult learning or literacy programme services, internet services, recreational services, bindery services, special needs services, social inclusion, among others.

The services explained below promote public library for national integration:

- i. Outreach Services: One of the information services remered is in the area of organizing outreach programmes within the host community to ensure adquate publicity as to avail the people of the information resources and services available to them through the library. Without any form of discrimmation irrespective of age, sex, religion, tribe etc. ther by promoting National Integration.
- Libraries organize some weekend, mostly Saturday programmes tagged story hours and rehxation activities which include story-telling, library tour, drama, dancing, riddles and jokes among others. Many public librarians make special effort to conduct film slows, group discussions on library books. Programmes such as inter-school debates, quiz, spelling bees competitions, young writers' book club among other which most times attracts various a wards by the organisers and sponsors of such programmes. All these programmes are geared towards boosting their educational development and promote national integration.
- education through the provision of information materials for increased leisure-time activity. Health talks on various issues are given to reach out to and encourage the general public even on the area of e-health corners where free information on health resources can easily be accessed e.g. family planning, HIV/AIDs, personal hygiene etc, initiative skills in the area of againth re, entrepreneurship skills, unemployed yours empowerment programmes that will avail them the opportunity of developing the creative minds for the conversion of j dbs creations, leisure programmes just to mention but a few which in turn lead national integration.
- magazines, novels and other light reading materials. Most people irrespective of age, sex, religion, tribe etc. fill their leisure time to listen, read or browse through these materials. Recreational services geared towards bringing particularly young children together thus inculcating in them the spirit of oneness through the provision of information that prings the attention of the children to unity and cohesion can be disseminated in

the children's section of the public library to foster national integration for development.

Roles of Public Library in the Promotion of National Integration

Provision of access to information and knowledge to meet the needs of the community and the public is a basic role of public library. Thus, the provision of access to all forms of useful information and works of imagination by public libraries remain an

Ingredient to foster community development for national integration. According to Makotsi (2004), libraries go beyond formal education; they encourage and sustain literacy, and support development.

Public libraries' innovative initiatives beyond their basic roles have positioned them to remain relevant in achieving national integration for development. One of these is the role to ensure that those group of people or individuals living with HIV/AIDs and communities who are victims of multiple deprivations and/are socially excluded due to unequal power are meaningfully engaged within their localities by making available and accessible information materials that will educate such citizens on their rights and opportunities and which in turn would inform their contributions and decisions in society.

Public libraries' engagement in services geared towards ensuring social inclusion and cohesion is a key role. That is, access to information is provided to men, women and children within its host community who may have been excluded from certain rights. Social inclusion refers to a policy designed to ensure that all people are able to participate in the society regardless of their background or specific characteristics. This means the promotion of equal opportunities to people irrespective of circumstances and those who are socially excluded politically, economically, socially and culturally (Amonoo & Azubuike, 2005).

For instance, the public library in its role of making accessible all forms of suitable information materials and services to meet the needs of special groups thus, those with disabilities in enhancing their education which is the right of every citizen is indeed a key to fostering national integration for development.

Public Libraries in the Promotion of Nigerian Culture, Political and Economic Development for National Integration.

The culture of Nigeria is shaped by Nigeria's multiple ethnic groups. The country has 527 languages, seven of which are extinct. Nigeria also has over 1150 dialects and ethnic groups. The six largest ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the Southeast, and the Yoruba predominate in the Southwest, the Tiv people of North Central Nigeria and the Efik - bibio in the South South. The Edo people are most frequent in the region between Yoruba land and Igboland. Many of the Edo tend to be Christian. This group is followed by the Ibibio/Annang/Efik people of the coastal south southern Nigeria and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta.

Nigeria's other ethnic groups, sometimes called 'minorities', are found throughout the country but especially in the north and the middle belt. The traditionally nomadic Fulani can be found all over West and Central Africa. The Fulani and the Hausa are predominantly Muslim while the Igbo are predominantly Christian and so are the Efik, Ibib'c, and Annang people. The Yoruba are equally likely to be either Christian or Muslim.

Yoruba Culture

The Yorubas are located in the Southwest of Nigeria and their leadership is monarchial in nature. They have kings who are allowed to take as many wives as they want and chiefs and titled individuals. They also practice traditional worship, paying homage to gods like Sango; the god of thunder, Cgun; the god of iron...etc. The Yoruba people are very friendly and welcoming to people of other tribes and nationalities.

Igbo Culture

The South Eastern part of Nigeria is the home of the Igbos, who are mostly Christians. Their traditional religion is known as Omenani. Socially they are led by monarchs known as Eze Igwes. These figures in turn are expected to confer subordinate titles upon men and woman that are highly accomplished. This is known as the Nze na Ozo title system. People of title are usually well-spoken, highly respected and well recognized in their communities.

Hausa-Fulani Culture

The Hausa-Fulani live in Northern Nigeria. Nigeria consists of many tribes and cultures, Hausa Fulani are the largest and one of the most popular tribe in Nigeria, even though the Hausa and Fulani are different tribes but they are considered as one tribe due to the close relationship that exists between the two tribes.

In general, Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups and as a result, a wide variety of traditional clothing styles. In the Yoruba tradition, women wear an iro (wrapper), buba (loose shirt) and gele (nead-wrap). The men wear buba (long shirt), sokoto (baggy trousers), agbada (flowing robe with wide sleeves) and fila (a hat). In the Igbo tradition, the men's cultural attire is Isiagu (a patterned shirt), which is worn with trousers and the traditional Igbo men's hat called Okpu Agwu. The women wear a puffed sleeved blouse, two wrappers and a headwrap. Hausa men wear barbarigas or kaftans (long flowing gowns) with tall decorated hats. The women wear wrappers and shirts and cover their heads with hijabs (veils).

Nigerian politics takes place within a framework of a federal, presidential, representative democratic republic, in which executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is held by the real government and the two chambers of the legislature: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together, the two chambers make up the law-making body in Nigeria, called the National Assembly, which serves as a check on the executive arm of government. The highest judiciary arm of government in Nigeria is the Supreme Court of Nigeria which was created after independence and also practices Baron de Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers based on the United States system and also practises checks and balances.

The economy of Nigeria is a middle-income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding manufacturing, financial, service, communications, technology and entertainment sectors. It is ranked as the 27th-largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, and the 24th-largest in terms of purchasing power parity. Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa; its re-emergent manufacturing sector became the largest on the continent in 2013, and it produces a large proportion of goods and services for the West African subcontinent. ^[26] In addition, the debt-to-GDP ratio is 16.075 percent as of 2019.

Nigeria ranks sixth worldwide and first in Africa in farm output. The sector accounts for about 18% of GDP and almost one-third of employment. Nigeria has 19 million head of cattle, the largest in Africa. Though Nigeria is no longer a major exporter, due 3 local consumer boom, it is still a major producer of many

agricultural products, including: cocoa, groundnuts (peanuts), rubber, and palm oil. Cocoa production, mostly from obsolete varieties and overage trees has increased from around 180,000 tons annually to 350,000 tons. Major agricultural products include cassava (tapioca), corn, cocoa, millet, palm oil, peanuts, rice, rubber, sorghum, and yams. In 2003, livestock production, in order of metric tonnage, featured eggs, milk, beef and veal, poultry, and pork, respectively.

Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated to be 35 bilion barrels (5.6× 10⁹ m³); natural gas reserves are well over 100 trillion cubic feet (2,800 km³). Nigeria is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The types of crude oil exported by Nigeria are Bonny light oil, Forcados crude oil, Qua Ibo c rude oil and Brass River c rude oil.

How Public Libraries can promotes Cultural activities for National Integration

Public libraries help in sustaining local cultural activities by organizing and hosting story telling. It provide cultural materials for all sections of the host community, not only largest or most powerful, hence the provision of cultural products from various ethnic minority groups.

The public libraries ensure that library collections and services help people to understand their local environment. The homogeneity of the society or its diverse culture. Presentation of lectures and seminars to disseminate information on political economic and cultural events in the society.

How Public Libraries can promotes Economy activities for National Integration

- Information alert services for business: Public libraries apply information relevant to business, for example highlights problems that have already been solved in other businesses and that would be of general interest to the community.
- Information about the community: The public libraries provide a guide containing relevant information on the city, such as restaurants, banks, hospitals, chemists and laundries, etc. This type of information has many users: new residents, visitors and entrepreneurs themselves who use the information to analyse markets and new pusiness opportunities.

- Job and Career Information: The public libraries also provide information which helps the unemployed or people looking for new job opportunities. They can provide annual business reports, books on job interviews or on how to write a curriculum vitae, etc.
- Book lists: The library could select books to assist business people to be successful in their business, list of the sold books in the business field, etc.
- Computer for use of businesses and the community in general: Some businesses still are not automated. The library could provide computers for business people and the public in general.
- Advice Service for businesses: The library could promote between business people and business specialists as well as having professional specialized librarians to attend to the users.

How Public Libraries can promotes Political activities for National Integration

The library has to join this crave by using the information and knowledge materials under their custody to provide the necessary information for the understanding of what it takes to govern, what governance is and how the rulers should rule exposing the fundamental human rights of the land to them.

Libraries are involved in various jobs and engagement in the day-to-day activities that they carry out. The libraries are not just built to or kept for book keeping and welcoming users. Their jobs are numerous, ranging from guidance, referrals and internet services to information literacy. Their activities also are geared towards a good and governable environment as they house and give out materials that will help in educating citizens of their nation run a better democracy.

The library in its own case is ready to maintain certain basic skills through organizing talks on elections using the information resources housed in it, that would empower the citizen and the leaders to become self-reliant, and foster interactions in order to move away from social vices like stealing, embezzlement, hijacking of voting materials, election violence, etc., that could jeopardize the democracy.

Skills like digital literacy, information literacy are better delivered to cicizens through the library to enable them use the computers effectively during

election/voting exercise to get information, to vote for their candid tes and source for election better practices.

2. Public libraries should give the equitable access to political economic and social?

The library also makes information available during the electioneering campaign and accommodates those who want to know about politics, assist in bridging the gap between the poor and the less privileged who could not afford newspapers, magazines etc., but rush back the library(ies) for newspapers, to read and get educated about what had happened and the things happening in the society.

Challenges faced by Public Library.

- i. Public library lack enough fund to carry out most of it operations as expecte.
- ii. Inadequate publicity has also been observed as a major challenge that has slowed the optimal utilization of the numerous information resources and services freely available to the communities and the general public.
- iii. Most of public libraries do not have sufficient trained personnel.
- iv. Most of public libraries are not fully equipped with functional ICT facilities and there is no adequate power supply.

Conclusion

Public library has contributed in fostering the spirit of unity among various groups within its communities irrespective of their cultural diversity thereby leading to development of national integration. The Library has a big role to play in national development. Consequently to guide in taking the advantage of the information resources at its disposal, it is pertinent for professionals with the requisite knowledge and competence at all levels to oversee the collection, management and dissemination of information. Library is an important institution in designing the establishment of an information policy since it has the expertise as an information provider.

Suggestions

The suggestions are as follows:

1. Government and non-government organization should fund public libraries so that it can strive to acquire Information resources both in print and electronic format on social, economic, political and educational development that are

- current and relevant to making the communities to be literate. This will aid national integration.
- 2. Public libraries should give the equitable access to political economic and social information using various electronic, social and print media platforms at their disposal. Such political information should include voters rights, elections schedule, among others, should be done with the intention to increase political participation and awareness. This free and equitable access to information will enable Individuals Bridge the gap in the knowledge which will enhance their political participation, economic development and invariably spurs national integration.
- 3. Public libraries should provide information and media literacy skills to members of the public so as to enable them respond properly to political campaign messages regardless of the media. These media literacy skills will also equip them with skills to detect "fake news" propagated during campaigns thereby enabling well informed decisions.
- 4. Awareness should be created by public libraries on the need for member of the public to participate in political activities and economic development. This awareness could be through the library's blog/website, radio jingles, telecast, library notice boards, flyers, posters, banners among others.
- 5. Library services and resources should be extended to those in the rural areas with limited access to scientific information. Such services and resources should focus on meeting their information needs in all aspects of human endeavour to include educational, medical, political, economical and social. These information will provide equitable access to opportunities for members of the public which is germane to building national integration.

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