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RE-POSITIONING OF LIBRARY SERVICES TOWARD NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

National integration is a unity of purpose in diversity that tends to paint a picture of a society that portrays the feeling of oneness and togetherness as one nation, that, despite the citizens differences in term of race, religion, culture, creed and cast, yet their co-existence is devoid of any form of political sentiment. National integration for national development is not realizable without the provision of access to right and adequate information. As it is a common practice for Library to provide access to information and also make available, an avenue for individuals to subjectively investigate matters that bothered on national integration, hence, the need for libraries of all types to re-position their services toward that, which encourage national integration, and subsequently foster national development. In doing this, libraries are encountered with some challenges such as insufficient funding; poor infrastructural facilities among others, and to overcome these challenges libraries need the support of an individual, organization and government through adequate funding and provision of information infrastructure and other facilities.

Keywords: Library, National Integration, National Development, Library Services, Nigeria.

Introduction

The concept of a nation is a country with an incorporated social and political structure. In other words, a nation refers to a body of people who have a feeling of unity among themselves. This feeling of unity is built based on common history, society, common values and their total way of life (culture). Above all, the feeling of unity among the people binds them together into a nation. However, the success of any nation largely depends on "National Integration and

National Development". The importance of these two terms cannot be overemphasized since they played a vital role in the success of any nation. Conceptually, the term national integration is a positive aspect of any nation that reduces socio-cultural and economic differences or inequalities and strengthens national unity and solidarity, which is not imposed by any authority.

National development, on the other hand, refers to a state of maturity which characterizes a nation-state (Lukpata, 2013). The author further explained that this maturity results from the interplay of modern political, economic and social forces and processes which transform diverse people, shaping a common geographical area, from acceptance and allegiance to and participation in a transitional policy to the acceptance and creations of and participation in a modern nation-state. In other words, Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) described national development as the time when the country can provide qualitative life for her citizenry. This means that both national integration and development are critical and essential factors for the sustenance and growth of any nation.

National integration is the bricks and caprice of any meaningful development a nation could record. National integration revolves around society unity of purpose and togetherness not minding our differences in term of political affiliation, religion, tribe, culture and every other peculiarity that alienated us from one another. National integration seems to be a daunting task in a country like Nigeria that was viewed as a multinational state that was inhabited by about two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups (of which the largest groups are Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo). The ethnic groups speak about five hundred different native languages with different cultures. Nigeria is divided roughly into half Christians which are mostly from the Southern Nigeria and the other half who are Muslims are mostly from the northern part of Nigeria while the least significant groups still practice indigenous religion. Nigeria was bedeviled by a myriad of challenges in the face of its rich natural and human resources because of lack of trust and unity of purpose, which threating its continue co-existence as a nation and subsequently hamper its growth and development.

Before the amalgamation, Nigeria as a nation was occupied by people of different socio-cultural backgrounds, different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and had achieved greater national unity and development. However, seven years after independence, it begins to battle

with the integration and development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession such as tragic Civil War from 1967-70, military seizures of political power and numerous constitutions had been written and discarded (Alozieuwa, 2014). In the 21st century, Nigeria also posed with the new challenges to national development and integration with the militancy of the unemployed youth in Jos, Kaduna, Borno, Yobe, Kastina, Niger-Delta and other cities. Some of the threats caused by this militancy group include kidnappings, destruction of oil pipelines, bomb blast among others. One of the factors responsible for these challenges in Nigeria is believed to be the issue of ethnicity (Sanusi, 1990), that is, Nigeria consists of different ethnic groups with different social, cultural, political and religious backgrounds. This has made it almost impossible to be truly integrated and developed as a nation. In light of this, many people predicted that as long as Nigeria continues to grapple with these challenges, the problem of nation-building, national integration and development will remain a topical issue. In spite of the efforts of the government in pursuing national integration and development, Nigeria still fares poorly in oneness and development indices (Igbuzor, 2006).

To combat the challenges of national integration and development, Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014) affirmed that one of the important tools to sustain national integration and national development is through the dissemination of right information through the right channel to the right person. This is because for any nation to be united and to be developed, it needs to have and provide relevant, updated and adequate information on food security, democracy, health, education, ethnic equality, gender equality among others. One of the institutions that are responsible for the acquisition and dissemination of information to the community of users is the library. Generally, libraries are a storehouse of knowledge that is responsible for the acquisition, processing, preservation and makes the resources available to the users that will enable the nation to sustain unity and development. Besides, the role of the library in national integration and development is to provide information service to support the educational, recreation, cultural, economic and technological endeavors of members in their respective communities. Based on this, it can be deduced that libraries are not exempted in achieving national integration and development through their information services and practice. Therefore, libraries of all types need to reposition and restructure their services and operations towards these goals that will help Nigeria and other Africa countries to sustain national integration and national development. It is

against this background that this paper will discuss how the library can reposition its services and operation towards the sustenance of national integration and national development in Nigeria.

Roles of Libraries in the Provision of Information Services for National Integration and National Development

Throughout the world, libraries of all types serve as one of the tools for national integration and developed a nation. Specifically, academic libraries, public libraries and national libraries have become a dynamic center for research. These libraries are central to the provision of information resources that empowers individuals such as students, lecturers, researchers among others to meet their information needs. In other words, libraries played vital roles in the integration and development of a nation through the provision of information resources. Most importantly, the importance of information in national integration and development cannot be overestimated. This is because the information is a data value in planning, decision making and evaluation of any program (Ajiboye & Tella, 2007). The authors explained further that data that have been subjected to some processing functions capable of answering user's query be it recorded, summarized, or simply collected that would help in decision making. Therefore, for any nation to be united or in oneness and develop, it needs to have and provide relevant and adequate information. To achieve this, the library played important roles. In support of this statement, Saliu (1999) opined that the library is a key source of information to citizens. In corroboration to this, Achitabwino (2007) averred that libraries play a greater role in national integration and development through the support they offer to the people by supplying them with relevant information in multiple formats.

Over the years, libraries had served as fundamental to community integration and development as they provide access to information and works of imagination in a variety of formats. To fulfill their roles in the integration and development of the nation, libraries go beyond formal education; they encourage and sustain literacy, through the provision of necessary information resources and services that will bring people of different background together. In the same vein, the information professional (librarians) also play important roles in the sustenance of national integration and development. This is because the cooperation and assistance of librarians is a basis for any nation to gain development (Malekabadizade, Shokrameh & Hosseini, 2009). By this cooperation and the provision of useful information in education,

economic, cultural, social and political contexts, national integration and development become reality. In addition to this, Krolak (2005) highlights the dynamism of the role of libraries and librarian when he postulated that libraries and librarians have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong learning opportunities with an emphasis on service, identifying user needs and communicating solutions. In light of this, it can be deduced that library, through the provision of relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information, they can contribute to the national integration and national development of the nation.

New Ways by which Libraries could Reposition their Information services and Operation for National Integration and Development

The role of the libraries in the provision of information resources and services for national integration and national development cannot be overemphasized. Since no nation can be united and developed without relevant and adequate information to drive its developmental sustainability. Aside from the traditional activities and operations of libraries, that is, acquisition, organization, dissemination and preservation of information for the community of users, in this 21st century, libraries need to reposition their operation and services that will help to sustain national integration and national development. Therefore, the following are some of the strategies that they can employ to reposition their operation for national integration and national development:

1. Collect, organize and disseminate information that society can access and use which will inform them on various issues of life.
2. Organizing local forums from time to time where people can talk about the problems they are facing, such as community issues, and area of concerns that can help to sustain nation integration and in turn take the nation to a greater height.
3. Librarian and other information professionals should also take part in open consultations that will lead to national integration and national development.
4. Libraries of all types should provide access to information and protect the fundamental freedoms of people, under national legislation and international agreements.
5. Libraries should also increase access to information and knowledge, buttress by universal literacy, which is an essential pillar for national integration and national development.

6. The library should establish a branch of information centers in local communities which will help the library to extend its services to people at the grass-root level.

7. The library should collaborate with the government department or ministries that are responsible for national integration and national development to know the areas that they need to adjust their service and mode of operation.

8. Libraries should promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Challenges Militating against Repositioning of Library Services and Operation for National Integration and National Development

For the library to reposition their services and mode of operations for national integration and national development, there are some possible challenges that they could encounter. These challenges include insufficient of the fund; poor infrastructure; inadequate professional staff, inadequate facilities; epileptic power supply among others.

i. **Insufficient of Fund:** This is one of the challenges that libraries could face in repositioning their services and operation for national integration and national development. This is because for libraries to reposition their services and mode of operation for national integration and development, they need enough funds. However, most of the libraries in developing countries do not have enough funds to carry out these operations thereby militates them in achieving their goals. In support of this, Apotiade (2002) laments that libraries are not adequately funded. In light of this, Krolak (2005) suggests that libraries have to be appropriately funded if they are to be effective and attractive.

ii. **Poor infrastructural facilities:** This is another challenge that libraries faced during repositioning their services towards the attainment of national integration and development. Most of the libraries in developing countries especially public library were in short of poor infrastructure and facilities. In support of this, Krolak (2005) postulated that appropriate buildings are needed to protect library materials. This is because most of the information resources and facilities in the library such as books, computers, and audio-visual materials

are very sensitive and have to be protected from extreme weather conditions and other agents of destruction.

iii. **Lack of adequate professional Librarian:** For libraries to achieve their goals on national integration and development, they need professional librarians. However, with a look of things, most of the libraries in Nigeria were occupied by non-professionals which could pose challenges to the libraries in promoting national integration and development. In support of this, Apotiade (2002), as well as Krolak (2005), affirmed that many libraries do not have qualified personnel to run them.

iv. **Inadequate Facilities:** The issues of inadequate facilities associated with most of the libraries in Nigeria and other developing countries which have become barriers for libraries to meet their goals of providing information for national integration and national development. To buttress this point, Apotiade (2002) ascertained that libraries need sufficient space and facilities to accommodate new types of materials such as computers, CD-ROM and other sensitive information materials in the library.

Conclusion

This paper had extensively discussed how libraries of all types could reposition their services and operation for national integration and national development. Based on the discussion so far, it can be deduced that national integration and national development are the important factors that determine the peaceful co-existence and development of any nation. However, to achieve this, relevant, accurate, up-to-date information resources and services are vital tools that government and individuals need to sustain both national integration and national development. Therefore, libraries of all types such as national, public, academic, school and special libraries which have always been a repository of knowledge should provide relevant information to the government and the citizen.

Recommendations

Based on the possible challenges that the library could encounter when repositioning their services and operation for national integration and national development. This paper, therefore, tenders the following recommendations:

1. Libraries should organize programs that will involve different tribes which will, in turn, contribute to the national integration and development.

2. Libraries should acquire relevant and up-to-date information materials on national integrations and development, and create awareness for these materials for the library users.

3. The federal government and parent institution of the library should allocate enough funds for the library to reposition and restructure their mode of operation for national integration and development

4. Library management should also employ qualified professional library staff that has cognate experience in the field of library and information science which will give help the library to easily reposition their service and operations towards national integration and national development.

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