THE ROLES OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN DEVELOPING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND READING CULTURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: **The significant downside of reading culture is getting more and more obvious in the Nigeria society. Individuals are more obsessed with getting rich than to improve their own knowhow, they want wealth and not books. Whereas, for a better tomorrow, a clearer and purposeful future, knowledge is the key. It is the path to endless possibilities of enormous human, technological, and capital development. To hand these over to the citizenry, libraries and librarians holds the key, the key that unlocks the door to edifying and meaningful information. 400 well-structured questionnaire entitled the Roles of Libraries and Librarians in Promoting Information Management and Reading Culture in Nigeria was used to gather information from twelve (12) government schools, 350 of those questionnaire was recovered and analyzed. The result showed that librarians are experts at finding and organizing information meaningfully for political and economic turnaround. The impacts of library would have been greater, if not for challenges such as: lack of functional information policy, poor funding, and ICT challenges, among others. However, this study recommends solutions such as: re-introduction of community/mobile library services to serve as a bold step to reach out to all and sundry in Nigeria, direct budgetary provision to all categories of libraries and enough manpower to see to library development, among others.**

Keywords: **Libraries and Librarians, Reading Culture, Human Technological and Capital Development.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The place of the library in the educational programme of any society cannot be underrated. This is so because library provides unhindered access to information needed for academic, economic and social advancement of any nation (Raphael, 2016). Ogayi and Chima (2012) *see the library as an organized collection of books and other information materials for study, teaching, research and recreation.* Libraries provide physical or digital access to materials and may be a physical building or room, or a virtual space or both. Wikipedia (2015) maintains that a library can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blue-ray Discs, e- books, audio-books, databases, and other formats. With all the features and effectiveness of library clearly stated, most individuals still finds it unnecessary to inculcate the necessity for reading habit. According to a common saying; "if you want something hidden, put it in writing." As it is no longer a strange feeling in our immediate environment. Students are less or not interested in visiting the library or reading when required.

Reading is an act of being able to understand, comprehend, make sense and utterly interpret written symbols or letters (Victoria and Nwanne, 2017). Aina, Okusaga, Taiwo and Ogundipe (2011) opined that *reading can be defined as a process of comprehending the representation of symbols that are written and printed by looking at them, recognizing them and sometimes verbalization of these visual signs. It involves a mental formulation of communication which*

represents sounds in human speech. Reading takes place when the reader understands what has been encoded and decodes it properly. Reading is a vital mean of acquisition of knowledge, skills and expression of thought especially in this modern world of science and technology which demands that one should be able to take in an intelligent and informed interest of happenings within ones environment and the world in general. Reading and writing are the premises to a secured occupational coherence; it is closely related to the advancement an individual gets out of life. Each child needs to become fully competent in reading in order to succeed in school and to discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a society. A citizen who reads has the capacity to participate actively in the continuity of learning.

There is a general belief that students' reading culture is on a **decline in Nigeria**. Ozoegu (2012) does not consider it an overstatement to say that students' reading culture is dying every day. He maintains that since reading has become a burden to most students, their academic achievement have continued to remain poor. **Ngwoke (2006) observes with dismay that most students today cannot express themselves in clear error-free English due to their total apathy to reading. Students with poor reading skills receive poor grades at school, get easily distracted and frustrated, have behavioural problems, seem to dislike school, and often fail to develop their potentials (Raphael, 2016).** According to Rosenberg (2000), children with poor reading habits have higher chances of anti-social behaviour. Delinquency, school violence, bullying, and examination malpractices all appear to have correlation with poor reading skills. This however, does not mean that all those with poor reading skills display such anti-social behaviours.

Raphael (2016) opined further that most people would rather not read for leisure except for a purpose. In most cases we read when we have a programme at hand or to pass examinations. *Many of us would rather prefer visiting friends, sit and chat, watch television or play video games than to read a book. Even when we read, we do not read to broaden our knowledge, we read because it is mandatory at that point in time.* The aforementioned challenges breeds the mandate, for this study, to look carefully into the roles of libraries and librarians towards the improvement of reading culture in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The necessity to improve the low rate of library usage, information management and reading culture among students particularly, have been a daunting task among librarians. The side effect of the dilemma is affecting all sectors in Nigeria be it security, politics, health, economy etc. Even with the paradigm shift from manual data processing to the use of Information and Communication Technology, libraries, librarians and users respectively are looking for a way forward from this predicament. To this effect, the lacuna is what this paper stands to proffer solutions to.

Objectives of the Study

The unequivocal parameters to erase the parasite feasting on human's attitude towards reading lies under a single roof; "the library and its handler, the librarian". Together, the two can minimize the long standing negligence of human towards reading. This study therefore, set the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the roles being played by libraries and librarians in promoting information management and reading culture in Nigeria.

2. To investigate the challenges faced by libraries and librarians in promoting information management and reading culture in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study will be significant to the national government, students, teachers, and the general public. Also, it will propagate an immerse literature on the scope of this topic for educational institutions in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study will help people in the society and students to have a rethink and be more conscious on their thoughts towards library usage and reading culture. Findings of this study will kindle a new zeal in the people towards promoting literacy through reading habits.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to government owned schools in Ilaro, Ogun State and the study it entails the information gathered from the selected schools.

Research Questions

This study will provide solution to the following questions.

1. What are the roles being played by libraries and librarians in promoting reading culture in Nigeria?

2. What are the challenges faced by libraries and librarians in promoting reading culture in Nigeria?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is a powerful instrument of information and communication which is expected to begin from cradle. It can be seen as a knowledge acquiring process, involving the reader and the text, which is enhanced by the reader's prior knowledge and experience (Raphael, 2016). Tracy and Akande (2008) see reading as a form of entertainment and an essential life skill. Reading can be silent or vocal. MacLeod (2014) has identified two basic types of silent reading as intensive and extensive reading, both of which enhance comprehension of text at various degrees. In reading, we perceive and comprehend communication, which involves, seeing and recognizing textual demands, such as letters and phrases, combined in sentences and, using the previous knowledge of the words and their context usage to interpret meaning. On the other hand, Ogayi and Chima (2012) say that, reading involves being able to obtain three types of information namely; the information which is clearly stated (factual or literal), the information which is not clearly stated, but implied (inferential or interpretive) and the information which involves making judgment (critical or evaluative reading).

Ngwoke (2006) defines reading as the recognition and conscious reproduction of written or printed symbols, words, word groups and sentences by means of eye or finger contact. Every attempt made to define reading has always revealed the need for comprehension. Wikipedia (2015) sees reading as a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning, and maintains that reading serves as a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Robinson and Davidson (1999) see reading as, looking at, and having understanding of printed or written words; to speak words which are printed or written, to learn or gain knowledge of something by reading; to look at or be able to see something and get information from it. Libraries appears to be an enhancer of effective students' effective reading habits since it offers readers the option of selecting from a wide variety of reading texts. It equally provides other educative aids.

The decline in reading among students appears to be an offshoot of technological advancements that have brought about overall changes in family, social and economic conditions. Poor reading habits occur in children and young people because reading is not considered a relevant leisure activity as it does not form part of children's social interaction like home video and internet interaction. Reading is somehow considered a solitary pursuit and so, not attractive when compared with the interactive activity on the internet. There is also an over- riding desire among young people to spend more time with their friends than to remain at home reading. Such attitude appears to be the brain behind the seeming abandonment of reading of print materials for internet browsing which appear to be drowning every reading appetite among secondary school students (Raphael, 2016).

The internet is only an aspect of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). When computers and communication technologies are combined, it results to information technology. ICT defines the convergence of several arms of communicative media used to gather, store, process, analyze, retrieve and disseminate information (Raphael, 2016). The computer which is a programmable multi-purpose machine accepts data, processes such into usable information and produces result as output. Communication technology consists of electromagnetic devices and systems for communication over a long distance. Communication technology devices include; telephones, radio, cable television and online among others. Gokhe (2015) agrees that ICT is a technology that supports activities involving information. Gokhe maintains that such activities include gathering, processing, storing, and presenting data. Increasingly, these activities also involve collaboration and communication; hence information technology (IT) has become ICT. Ideally, the advent of information communication technology should enhance acquisition of knowledge through reading. However, the reverse appears to be the case as the innovation has not been totally embraced from all quarters.

The reading culture of students may either build or destroy their academic excellence. Ozoegu (2012) observes that people hardly read these days unlike in times past when students read not only for academic purposes but also for the fun and entertainment side of the exercise. Njoku (2012) observes that reading has become burdensome to students such that most students graduate as half-baked, thus finding it difficult to practise in their areas of discipline. Abanobi (2012)

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laments that the internet is beginning to eat into students' reading values. Holt (1998) remarks that, a situation in which a large number of people rarely read, either because they lack the skill or simply because they do not care enough to take time to concentrate, will pose serious problems in the future. Reading is essential to full participation in modern society. Reading adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, empowers and emancipates citizens, and as well brings people together. In the words of Sisulu (2004), reading is one of the fundamental building blocks of learning. Becoming a skilled and adaptable reader enhances the chances of success at school and beyond. Reading is not just for school, it is for life. Reading in its variety is vital to being better informed, and having a better understanding of others (Raphael, 2016).

In Nigeria, there has been a general outcry, and a serious one for that matter, over the falling standard in education. This fall has been attributed to several factors, but hardly has the inadequacy of libraries, librarians, and inappropriate use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) been mentioned. Provision of appropriate education on the use of Information and communication technology will likely enhance reading among students. For instance, students should be educated on the advantages in downloading reading materials from the internet. They are to be aware that they can browse and download from the internet the contents of books they use for studies in the class which they may not be financially capable of buying from the market.

The Role of the Library in Promoting Reading

Reading is basic to learning and its process is not only tedious and gradual, but also endless. While it is basic to learning, learning itself is also basic for survival. Hence, lack of reading is disastrous because, it is the most efficient way of acquiring knowledge and a source of achieving sound and physical development of our minds. The library is a place designed to freely support the attainment of these purpose. Libraries play invaluable role in the educational set-up of any institution or country and can be seen as the national treasures where knowledge, both in print and non-print formats, is acquired, preserved and disseminated to the reading public. Libraries are generally regarded as storehouses of information and it is made available to users through print and non-print resources because this is a vital aspect of the world's systems of education and communication (Victoria and Nwanne, 2017).

People in various disciplines including students use library resources for their work. Some people also visit libraries to obtain materials for pleasure reading or for some kind of leisure activities. Therefore, there is need for the provision of libraries in our primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions. One can also regard the library as an agent for educational and social change. Agbama (2014) averred that it is often said that if you teach a child to read, you have made him a king. Developing the right reading culture help nations to develop and no nation can develop without its people reading. Reading makes a man, and it helps to develop the mind, to be informed, thoughtful and constructive.

Librarians are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs. Libraries provide quiet areas for studying; they offer common areas to facilitate group study and collaboration. Libraries provide public facilities for access to other electronic resources and the internet. Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. Libraries extend services beyond the physical walls of a building, by providing materials accessible by electronic means, and by providing the assistance of librarians in navigating and analyzing very large amounts of information with a variety of digital tools. ICT is expected to provide quick and unhindered access to information- gathering, information- processing, information- storing, and data presentation.

Public sensitization by the librarians on library establishment in schools, library usage, packages, and accessibility should be carried out, as it will further strengthen people's interest and desire for reading. Most primary and post primary schools in Nigeria are void of functional libraries. This notion makes it a necessity for libraries and librarians to be given more support and importance, so as to aid their cause towards the promotion of reading culture in Nigeria.

Challenges Faced by Libraries and Librarians in Promoting Reading Culture in Nigeria

As the situations of libraries differ worldwide, so their challenges. In Nigerian context, the life circle of libraries is unfavorable and bleak, from policies establishing them to poor funding and design, and inadequate manpower, and myopic vision. Some libraries may exist, but by mere shadow of nomenclature. The identified problems are discussed below:

Poor Funding: Nigeria does not have direct budgetary allocation for library development and services. In a situation where the parent institution allocate fund to the libraries (as a subsidiary) is grossly unpalatable. In academic libraries, the said 10% of the total university budget to go for library is not realistic. In almost all the states in Nigeria, no state can boast of running public library efficiently. In some states, the presence of public library has completely disappeared, or operating in a mere image of nomenclature. According to (Irunegbo, Opara & Ohanyere, 2011) inadequate funds account for lack of hiring of ICT professionals, inadequate acquisition of reading resources –books, periodicals, and other ICT resources, lack of intensive training and re-training of staff, infrastructural deterioration and poor maintenance. It also stunts design and disrupt implementation of programs which reading and literacy are part of.

African Factors: (Irunegbo, Opara & Ohanyere, 2011) maintained that lack of maintenance culture, lack of innovative spirit, absence of information technological environment, droning reading and learning habit, negligent of ICT application, over dependence on foreign inventions/materials (technology), absence of indigenous commercial library services, deficiency of staff skill in information/knowledge management, incessant corruption among the leaders and deficiency in program design, militate against library and its literacy promotion in Nigeria.

Economic Factors: In a country where majority are living in poverty, it means that reading cannot be their problem. "Empty stomach comprehend nothing'', Nigeria citizens are battling with hunger, until food is presented on the table of common man, reading will still be a pending agenda for people. Again, Nigeria economy has failed to curtail inflation, if prices of essential commodities like wares, food items, shelter, transportation and services are high; Library may not have enough fund to purchase a good and adequate books needed for promotion of literacy.

ICT Challenge: Lack of ICT-proficiency among the Librarians and users is great hiccups challenging ICT base knowledge/information awareness. Again, the global information access which tends to bridge the gap in knowledge availability between developed and developing countries are stalled. Some Libraries have computers, and some with access to internet but almost none provides access to information especially as concerns to e-library services. This is because librarians lack constant training in ICT, orchestrated by lack of stable electricity in Nigeria, high cost of ICT training, and inadequate knowledge of software application, poor funding and lack of critical Information literate skill.

Lack of Professional Staff: The curriculum of librarianship needs to be restructured to suit the present day information services. The situation whereby librarians are half-baked does not transcend positively in the league of efficiency in library management. Inadequate hiring of experienced librarians in most Nigeria library has directly, hampered the core function of library and invariably queers the needed reading and literacy campaign.

Irrelevant Materials: Most libraries are at the mercy of archaic materials. The books are not current, not repaired (when damaged) and not relevant for the target readers. Inadequate publishing of local books, over reliance on foreign books (donations), and librarian's limited knowledge on collection development, has constituted to the acute shortage of books/information sources, thereby, leading to irrelevant library stocks.

Lack of Needs Analysis: Most libraries in Africa are established with-out a professional needs analysis of the host community, resulting in information services based upon assumptions and not on actual needs. Libraries are virtually cut its services from the majority of general public; often the contents are relevant to urban-based class who are relatively educated. Lack of professional librarians with research skills contributes to research being done by researchers and consultants rather than library practitioners, (Mostert, 2001, quoted in Krolak, 2005). Just as need analysis is necessary before establishing a service library, continuing monitoring, and evaluation with active community participation is also crucial to ensures that library services remain relevant.

Lack of Functional Information Policy: Lack of working paper (policy) on information is a weak point on development of information and literate society. Where there is no functional information policy, released fund will not have a directional impact. Also, there will be inadequate circulation, regulation, quantity and qualitative information materials. Mostert (2001) stated that a written information policy should be made prerequisite for every country involved in information provision. Where this is lacking, the country may lose vision on acquisition, organization and dissemination of information, especially as relate to national literacy achievement. Finally, frequent power failure, mismanagement of library fund, poor existence of archives institutions, corruption and government negligence of educational sector adversely affect reading habit in Nigeria.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. 400 well-structured questionnaire entitled the Roles of Libraries and Librarians in Promoting Information Management and Reading Culture in Nigeria was used to gather information from twelve (12) government schools selected by simple random sampling out of a total number of thirty three (33) government schools in Ilaro, Ogun State. A total number of 350 (87.5%) respondents responded to the questionnaire items. The questionnaires were administered and collected using research assistants. Results of findings were analyzed using frequency table and percentages.

Items on the questionnaire were based on three factors, "Agree, Disagree, Undecided" – ADU. The result analysis is done based on the output of those aforementioned parameters.

Table 1: Frequency rate of roles being played by libraries and librarians in promoting reading culture in Nigeria

S/N	Items	A		D		U	
1	Librarians are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs.	288	82.3%	40	11.4%	22	6.3%
2	Libraries provide quiet place for reading	320	91.4%	20	5.7%	10	2.9%
3	Libraries have latest and relevant information when required	200	57.1%	80	22.9%	70	20%
4	ICT is predominant in most libraries and their materials is accessible anywhere, anytime	100	28.6%	194	55.4%	56	16%
5	Librarians organizes public awareness on reading culture and library usage…..	80	22.9%	210	60%	60	17.1%

The results revealed that respondents acknowledged the library as a quiet place for reading, with a response rate of 91.4%. Followed closely with a response rate of 82.3% in support of high level of expertise by the librarians, it is obvious that they can solve the problems of low library use.

Furthermore, 57.1% of the respondents opined that libraries have latest and relevant information they required. The result also stated further that ICT is not predominant in most libraries and their materials is not accessible anywhere, anytime; with 28.6% of the respondents in favor of the notion. However, it is of huge concern that librarians do not organize public awareness on reading culture and library usage as only 22.9% of the respondents are in support of the level of awareness. A serious indication that libraries in that neighborhood need to improve their collections and be up to date.

Table 2: Frequency rate of challenges faced by libraries and librarians in promoting information management reading culture in Nigeria

S/N	Items	A		D		U	
1	Lack of functional information management policy	300	85.7%	20	5.7%	30	8.6%
2	Poor funding	310	88.6%	20	5.7%	20	5.7%
3	Irrelevant materials	260	74.3%	50	14.3%	40	11.4%
4	ICT challenges	260	74.3%	40	11.4%	50	14.3%
5	Lack of professional staff	272	77.7%	22	6.3%	56	16%

Table 2 above showed lack of information management policy, to this effect released fund will not have a directional impact. 85.7% of the respondents were in support of the notion. with 88.6% of the respondents sharing the same view. Both irrelevant materials and ICT challenges in the libraries shared the same consideration from the respondents, as 74.3% of the respondents believed that the two challenges demands contemplation. Lack of professional staff has been a long lying uphill task for libraries, 77.7% of the respondents were of the notion that library staff needs re-orientation on how to meet up with the high demand of technological advancement and discoveries.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The above results opined that librarians are experts at finding and organizing and managing information for meaningful national development by their training and experience. They are capable of proffering solutions to the challenges if properly motivated with all required resources and materials. However, of great consideration is poor funding towards the

library as it is either libraries are not considered in the budget (Zero allocation) or partially considered. This issue of poor funding is found to contribute to employment of qualified and adequate hands and where there are unqualified librarians, people consulting the library may not be given satisfactory attention, and that may discourage them from making further use of the library facilities. In tandem with the above, Busayo (2011), emphasized that the role of libraries cannot be overemphasized in the provision of the much needed facilities for the development of good reading habits among users, as it caters for different reading interests at various stages of our intellectual development and for pleasurable reading. With several reasons pointing to the merit of libraries and librarians in promoting information management and reading culture, the challenges they are facing can never be overlooked.

5. CONCLUSION

Libraries and Librarians; one entity housed in two bodies 'is' among the numerous initiative formulated globally towards attaining reading culture, sound education, literacy, learning and information-based society. In each case, libraries and librarians play a cardinal role in achieving the desired goal on programs which tends to inculcate reading habit to the populace. Insufficient funds, outage policies, ICT challenges, irrelevant materials, lack of professional staff, lack of genuine commitment in execution of designed programs among others, have consequentially pointed to be the reasons for reading and literacy campaign failure and unsustainability in Nigeria. However, in order to enshrine the culture of reading in Nigeria society, this study came up with considerable solutions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Base on the challenges facing libraries and librarians, and effort made to attain a reading culture cum literate society. The following were recommended to sort practical and workable solutions to the problems.

✓ The initiative "Book-First" should be considered by Nigeria government as drive to formulate a policy mandating every child from one-year-plus (1yr+) to receive a free book or more on visit to health service. Also, school libraries should serve as resource centre where children will have access to reading material, and such centre should extended its services to day-care, pre-nursery, and nursery schools.

✓ Re-introduction of community/mobile library will be a bold step to reach out books to the door-step of every Nigerians.

✓ Direct budgetary provision should be made for library development. With this, efficiency is guaranteed in policy implementations, program design, planning and execution. Opportunity for staff (re)training and general library maintenance is also assured.

✓ Adequate funds should make available for local publishing companies, through single digit interest rate and government partnership with publishers should be friendly.

✓ Government should be participatory with NGOs, individual or groups with programs that promote reading and literacy, through financial and welcome policy support.

✓ A good policy encouraging information society should be formulated and implemented to ensure nation-wide coverage on literate awareness. On the future of good information, literate, and reading society, Tong (1993) sum that, the future belongs to those countries, whose citizens know how to handle information, knowledge, and technology productively. These are today the most important factors for economic success, not the traditional resources or production factor.

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