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REPOSITIONING OF LIBRARIES SERVICES TOWARD NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Komolafe Ranmilowo Saidat
Osun State University, Osun, Nigeria., rsk05@yahoo.com

Oyeyemi Francis Olusanjo
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, francisoyeyemi@gmail.com

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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 on the basis of 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, due to the fact that 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 while national development 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 Oluwatoying (2011) described national development as the time when the country is able to 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.

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 independent, it begin 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). Over the years, Nigeria had been facing the new challenges of national integration and development with the militancy of the unemployed youth in Jos, Kaduna, Borno, Yobe, Kastina, Niger-Delta and other cities. Some of the treats 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 to become almost impossible to be truly integrated and developed as nation. In the 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).

In order to combat the challenges of national integration and development, Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014) affirmed that one of the important tools needed to sustain national integration and national development is information. 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 other. One of the institutions that is responsible for the acquisition and dissemination of information to the community of users is library. Generally, libraries are store house of knowledge that are responsible for the acquisition, processing, preservation and make the resources available to the users that will enable the nation to sustain unity and development. In addition, the role of the library in national integration and development is to provide information service to support the educational, recreation, cultural, economic and technological endeavours 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 services and information delivery. Most importantly, for libraries to achieve this, they need to restructure and redefined their service towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is an international initiative. This initiative has eight goals that revealed the eagerness by governments globally to reduce poverty and hunger and to tackle poor quality education, ill-health, gender inequality, environmental degradation and empowerment for peoples of the world. These goals respond to the world's most unity and development challenge (Onoyeyan & Adesina, 2014). 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 library can reposition their services and operation towards the sustenance of national integration and national development in Nigeria.

Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to discuss repositioning of library services for national integration and national development in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper will:

1. highlight roles of libraries in the provision of information resources for national integration and national development;
2. discuss the roles of libraries in the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for national integration and national development;
3. frame the new ways by which libraries could reposition their services for national integration and development; and
4. identify possible challenges that court library could faced in repositioning their services and operation for national integration and national development.

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

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 centre 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 the national integration and development cannot be overestimate. This is because information is a fact that provides answers to queries and some kind of resolve to an uncertainty that can cause changes in human perspective as regard to any state of affairs or happenings in the country (Laaro, Oyeyemi, Oyedokun & Oyewumi, 2018). In other words, information is a data value in planning, decision making and evaluation of any programme (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. In order to achieve this, 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.

From the inception, 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. In order 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 diverse 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 becomes 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 the 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.

Role of Libraries in the Attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Despite the fact that libraries are social institution that is responsible for the selection, acquisition, and dissemination of information resources to the user, they played important roles in the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in most of the developing countries. Since libraries assemble information from countless sources and place them at the command of individual user, and supports and sustains individual freedom of enquiry and opinion, they create strong relationship with the MDGs so as to achieve the setout goals. For any nation to achieve millennium development goals, libraries play important roles because libraries are responsible for the satisfaction of a fundamental need of society (Rubin, 2000). The author

went further that the need to have the society's record readily accessible to the citizenry, and society continues to need access to organized information more than ever before. On the other hand, the concept of MDGs provides the link between local and international actions towards national integration and holistic development (Onoyeyan & Adesina, 2014). According, to Krolak (2005), MDGs involve working closely together at a global level to achieve a common vision, and information is an indispensable factor to achieve this development. This means that for any nation to be united and develop, it needs to have and provide relevant and adequate information on every issue. In this situation, libraries can provide such access to information that would enable people enjoy gainful lives as they are skilled at acquiring, organizing, disseminating and preserving materials in diverse forms so that when they are required, they can be quickly located and utilized. In other words, libraries have been instrumental to community and national development, in achieving Millennium Development Goals are crucial (Onoyeyan & Adesina, 2014).

The following are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for national integration and development, and how libraries can help to achieve them:

- i. **Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger:** This is the first goal of MDGs. This goal addresses the need to promote development in a balanced, holistic and integrated way. In order to achieve this, information is instrumental to achieve these goals and libraries have a part to play in supporting and contributing to achieve them. According to Mchombu and Cadbury (2006), information is critical and strategic resources in national integration and development, which includes literacy acquisition and poverty reduction. The rural and urban people need to access the appropriate information to fight poverty, deprivation, and illiteracy. Therefore, the establishment of libraries in the communities is one way of ensuring that poor and marginalized people have access to information. In the same vein, Forsyth (2005) also affirmed that libraries can help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by raising awareness, or providing a place where relevant information in appropriate language and formats can be found. In light of this, information professionals including librarian need to merge indigenous knowledge, expertise from developed countries, local conditions and such, package that information in a format that will be meaningful to the local inhabitants in their quest to eradicate poverty.

- ii. Achievement Universal Primary Education:** This is another goal of Millennium Development Goals. From the inception, education is one of the most important factors that has a direct relation to the national integration and development of society, and continues to assume the same role as long as society exists. Obaji (2005) stated that reports from developing countries often indicate that primary school enrolment keeps dropping, sometimes at a nursery level. In the same vein, Alokun (1998) opined that mass illiteracy has been one of the factors militating against the achievement of societal needs and the desire for rapid socio-economic and political development of any nation. It will be very difficult to achieve universal primary education without school or public libraries being involved. In the light of this, Forsyth (2005) stated that a strong library program can lead to higher academic achievement among the people in both the rural and urban community.
- iii. Promotion of Gender Equality and Empower Women:** Gender equality can be defined as the equality of the genders that ensures that all persons irrespective of gender have equal opportunity to develop their talents (Wikipedia, 2009). To achieve this, libraries offer secure environments in which women and girls can obtain the information they need to take charge of their lives and influence their societies. In support of this statement, Forsyth (2005) stated that libraries can also help to promote gender equality and empower women when selecting resources taking into account the broad areas of women's work and interests, and sometimes lower levels of literacy which women have. Through this, it will be easy for the nation be developed and united.
- iv. Reduction of Child Mortality and Improve Maternal Health:** This is the fourth and fifth goal of Millennium Development Goals. Uhegbu and Igwe (2006) stated that child mortality relates to the number of children that die out of one condition or the other. Therefore, the report of United Nations Development Program 2010 on MDGs revealed that there has been some progress in reducing child mortality but efforts need to be scaled up. In order to solve this problem, Uhegbu and Igwe (2006) opined that ignorance needs to be tackled so as to deal with child mortality. Some libraries such as public and national libraries take upon them the responsibility of providing answer to the issue of ignorance among the infant mothers and community at large. In support of this statement Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014) postulated that libraries are places where information to empower communities to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, can be made available in written, spoken or electronic form.

The information could be available in books, pamphlets, audio, audiovisual or web-based forms.

- v. **Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases:** According to the report of Oyelude and Adepeju (2007) revealed that the HIV/AIDS scourge has reached alarming proportions worldwide. Therefore, in order to sustain national development, Tise (2009) postulated that libraries and other information centers have the potential of being key partners with health workers and health initiatives in promoting the behavioural changes needed to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Makotsi (2004) corroborated this by stated that libraries can provide necessary information about all sorts of issues and act as a focal point for the community by hosting local forums where people can talk through problems, such as HIV/AIDS and other community health issues.
- vi. **Ensuring Environmental Sustainability:** It is well known fact that living in a sustainable environment will prolong the lives of an individual. In line with this, Uhegbu and Igwe (2006) postulated that one of the indices for measuring quality living conditions in the contemporary world is sustainable environmental control because good food alongside good environment prolongs life. In the light of this, libraries can purposefully facilitate the provision and access to environmental information. Most especially public, academic, national library and other special library can provide information about how to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs to help reverse the loss of environmental resources (Forsyth, 2005).
- vii. **Develop a Global Partnership for Development:** Matoksi (2004) is of opinion that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have greater potential to help bridge the information gap between developed and developing countries, and even between rich and poor people, and also bringing people of different background together in the country. Therefore, libraries, either school, university (academic), public and special library have greater responsibilities in the development of a global partnership for national integration and national development by acquiring, packaging, organizing and disseminating knowledge and experiences to Nigerians (Uhegbu & Igwe, 2006). Global partnerships include the ability for all to access information, ideas and knowledge which are essential in an inclusive information society. Libraries can also foster understanding and communication, and this brings together some of the ideas for global national integration and development.

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. Due to the fact that, no nation can be unite 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. Library could organize local forums from time to time where people can discuss different 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 should also create awareness on the various development stated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the community of users they are serving.
5. Libraries of all types should provide access to information and protect fundamental freedoms of people, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.
6. Libraries should also increased access to information and knowledge, buttress by universal literacy, which is an essential pillar for national integration and national development.
7. The library should establish branch of information centers in local communities which will help library to extend its services to people at grass root level.
8. 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.

9. Libraries in collaboration with security agency could promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and provide access to all information needed.

Challenges Library could faced in Repositioning their Services and Operation for National Integration and National Development

In order for library to reposition their services and mode of operations for national integration and national development, there are some possible challenges that they could encountered. These challenges include: insufficient of 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 faced in repositioning their services and operation for nation 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 achievement their goals. In support of this, Apotiade (2002) laments that libraries are not adequately funded. In the 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 the course of 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 provide protection to 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 from 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 posse 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 growth and existence of any nation. However, to achieve this, relevant, accurate, up-to-date information resources and services are vital tools that government and individual 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 must be provide relevant information to the government and the citizen. Most importantly, public and national libraries, which are designed to provide information materials to all the people in the society for education, research, and practices among others need to reposition their services and operation towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which will facilitate the attainment of national integration and development.

Recommendation

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

Libraries should organize programmes on national integration and national development which will involve all the tribes in the country.

1. 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.
2. 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
3. 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.