



## **Education and Libraries for Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

**Princess Lilian Iroka<sup>1\*</sup> and Chigozie Martin Ndulaka<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Library Services Division, Abia State Polytechnic, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.*

### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper established a relationship between the library, education and sustainable development. One important resource for achieving the goals and objectives of education is the library. It discussed the library as a requisite for education for sustainable development at all levels of education and professions. It also emphasized the role of libraries in information dissemination to individuals and organizations at all levels. This paper also highlighted the problems militating against the performances of library and educational system and made recommendations. Finally, the paper emphasized the need to reposition and revamp our libraries and the entire educational system in order to make much progress towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

*Keywords: Library; education; sustainable development; literary.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

No meaningful and effective teaching and learning take place without information and

information resources because information is power and power belong to the people [1]. Information is a vehicle that drives people to a better understanding that in turn induces sound

\*Corresponding author: Email: [princesslilian13@yahoo.com](mailto:princesslilian13@yahoo.com), [ndulakacmn2015@yahoo.com](mailto:ndulakacmn2015@yahoo.com);

judgment and decision-making [2]. It is an irrefutable fact that libraries and information centers play unquestionable role in sustainable development through providing an integral component-information-required in decision-making and mapping the way forward in societies.

Libraries of all kinds/types (national libraries, public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, special libraries and digital libraries) are educational tool in developing individual and society at large through their services such as acquisition and processing of materials, repackaging of information, serving as center for research, contribution to education via encouraging reading habit, expanding learning process and development of critical thinking, thereby enabling the citizenry live responsibly [3]. Information which is the only preoccupation of libraries is a necessary ingredient in life. In this information age, one must be attuned with reliable and up-to-date information for rational decision-making, enlightening and all-round development. With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), libraries not only provide information traditionally but also in electronic forms, hence, the bibliographic database. Full-text documents and digital library collection are always available to users [1].

Information is a crucial factor in sustainable development which libraries are the only key to the necessary ingredients of life. According to [1], information made available by libraries plays a vital role in educational planning and has become a global phenomenon of great importance and concern in all spheres of human endeavour, especially in the educational sector. It is an integral part of the main plan and achievement of educational activities. He further opined that for education to be effective and efficient, it is essential to have well-equipped libraries. [4], opined that stocked libraries with books and other digital materials are best legacies that the human race can claim to have, for in the words of Cicero "A room without books is a body without a soul". This means that any educational institution without a library is not worth its salt.

The impact of library services is greatly felt in schools, colleges and universities since libraries permeate the entire fabric of the educational system. Education is recognized as one of the most fundamental building blocks for human development. Its importance in sustainable

development cannot be overemphasized. No nation can grow beyond its educational system. Education is the bedrock for growth, the key to development, the greatest investment and asset and enhances sustainable development in a nation and the libraries as the educational tool for sustainable development has a great role to play towards the realization of the broad goals of education. Hence the topic: Libraries as an educational tool for sustainable development.

## 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide the qualitative life for its citizenry. A large majority of the world's population are in the developing world. The problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, and growing inequalities continue to face less developed countries which Nigeria belongs to. Hopes of accelerated development are difficult to realize. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stakeholders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge human, material, and natural resources endowments. This has greatly affected her quest for improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the county. Sustainable development is essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of a country in order to successfully enhance the meaningful standard of living among the populace which libraries hold the key to all information needed to develop [5].

Sustainable development not only meets the need of present generation but also those of the future generation. In other words, it is the development that guarantees a better quality of life for everyone, now and for the generation to come [6]. According to Nevin [7], sustainable development emerged as a growing concern about human society's impact on the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission (formally the World Commission on Environment and Development) as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' [8]. This definition acknowledges that while development may be necessary to meet human needs and improve the quality of life, it must happen without

depleting the capacity of the natural environment to meet present and future needs. The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainability promotes both the interest of future generation and the earth's capacity to regenerate. At first, it emphasized the environment in development policies but, since 2002, has evolved to compass social justice and the fight against poverty as key principles of sustainable development.

In the work of [1], sustainable development means the overall change and improvement in the society as related to the individual in progress in the social, political, religious and economic structure of the nation. A major outcome of education is sustainable development. [6] noted that sustainable development encompasses a number of areas and stands as the idea of environmental, economic and social progress and equity, all within the limits of the world's natural resources. It goes without saying that rapid population increase impedes development. Phiri in [2] argues that for a democratic process to make sense, those that govern must be aware of the needs of those that are governed, whatever or whenever they. This can only be achieved if the politicians and electorates are provided with information relating to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As long as people are informed of such pertinent issues through their local libraries, the trend is likely to reverse. The world belongs to the living, so writes Thomas Jefferson [2]

### **3. ROLE OF LIBRARIES**

The libraries are considered as a hub of research and information and its role can never be denied by educating the masses. The basis roles of libraries whether academic, school, public, national, special or digital is seen as the extension of education hence perform the following functions:

#### **3.1 Information Services**

One of the important roles of the library is information provision which will help augment ideas collected from other sources. Information is an essential element in the communication process. With the advent of ICT in the digital library, this role is facilitated. Hence users can access information via the internet to update the knowledge and keep abreast of current trends.

#### **3.2 Educational Role**

Education has been defined as a complex of social processes of acquiring knowledge and experience, formally or other. Libraries are there to perform this activity because when a person is informed with information, he/she is equally being educated. Libraries ensure lifelong education by providing various information resources. They also support education by providing supplementary textbooks, reference materials and even non-print materials. Libraries enable the individuals to obtain spiritual, inspirational and recreational activities through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge [9].

#### **3.3 National Development**

Libraries play a great role in national development through the support they offer to the educational sector. It is an irrefutable fact that without libraries there as well can be no universities hence the creation of professionals' drought. All professionals, whether graduates or not, are capable of utilizing their skills through the knowledge they acquired through books and the internet in libraries. Lawyers safeguard the flow of justice and foster constitutional developments; teachers support literacy campaigns; doctors support health issues, the list is endless. All those are a product of information dissemination progress through different libraries [2].

#### **3.4 Self-development**

People can develop themselves by going to the library for independent studies. Individualized instruction can take place in the library with or without the help of any teacher yet this ensures an expansion of knowledge.

#### **3.5 Health Sector**

A vibrant health sector needs a well - documented and organized health information meant for dissemination to users and potential users in order to consolidate health records, planning and management. Libraries provide people with appropriate information on diseases and prevention measures, health care, side effects of premarital affairs, dangers of early pregnancies and any other health-related information [2].

### 3.6 Cultural Services

The library is the chief centre for cultural revival. It is the centre of all cultural activation because it actively promotes participation and appreciation of art literature which is part of cultural heritage is one of the areas stock materials highlights.

### 3.7 Politics

Information promotes and empowers citizen's participation in the democratic process; it maintains the rule of law and creates a viable outlet for the injection of public opinion. Information informs the policy-making process of political leadership, all of which nurtures the building of sustainable peace for the enhancement of the state [2].

### 3.8 Policy Formulation

Policymakers in Nigeria need strong information base to discharge their duties and the level of decisions taken by the political class depends on how informed they are.

### 3.9 Promotion of Marketing Tourism Sector

Libraries as reservoirs of information are the most reliable information reference centers where tourists can seek information on hotels, motels, national parks, mountains and other interesting places.

### 3.10 Training and Learning Media

The library is an indispensable training and learning laboratory. Some libraries are training media for manpower development.

### 3.11 Access to Knowledge

Libraries join resources together for maximum accessibility and usability by the potential users. Information is power and information brings knowledge. Hence the library helps its patrons to access such information and knowledge with ease and in turn, prepare an individual to prove him/herself as a responsible citizen in contemporary society.

### 3.12 Recreational Role

Users can read in the library at leisure for pleasure. Libraries provide various information

media (print and non-print) that are used for recreational activities.

## 4. LIBRARY AND EDUCATION

[10], gave an elementary definition of library as "a collection of literary documents or record kept for reference or borrowing". A more comprehensive definition was specified by Omojuwa in [10] as a learned institution equipped with treasure of knowledge maintained, organized and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources. In the other words, a library is an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreations and a beacon of enlighten that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one's mental vision and dignifies his habit, behavior, character, taste, attitude, conduct and outlook on life [10]. It can, therefore, be summed up that a library is an active information centre that collects, organize, preserve and disseminate information stores in different media to a target audience. However, education is described as the process of developing an individual physically, spiritually, socially, mentally, emotionally and orally for the well being of the individual and that of the society in which he belongs. Similarly, [4] opined that education is the preparation of man for life. The concept of education encompasses teaching and learning of specific skills and also imparting of culture from generation to generation.

One cannot talk about library without talking about education. Hence, they cannot be isolated from each other. Libraries have since ages been associated with education. Libraries are tools for sustainable development through the support they offer to the educational sector. These services are greatly felt in elementary schools, colleges and universities even in an informal setting since libraries permeate the entire fabric of the educational system. John Abdul Kargbo in [2] argues that experience has shown that a country's educational system could be as strong and as weak as the library resources that support that system. [11] observed that the library is a recognized and essential resources centre which no student can afford to dispense with if he wants to attain his academic goals. Libraries are established for educational purposes. No

education can win recognition without an organized and well-established library. No wonder, the National Universities Commission (NUC) critically evaluates the library before accrediting any education institution. Education cannot exist alone in the absence of library and library has no meaning if it cannot impart education.

Libraries foster self-education and stimulate educational growth. Education generally depends on the information resources available. Any effective and qualitative education depends on the library for its teaching, learning, research and expansion of knowledge [1]. [12] stressed that an academic library is the singular most important resources in the pursuit of goals and objectives of the institution of higher learning. She further stated that higher education would be elusive without the libraries. This indispensable role has been reflected in many descriptions of the library in the academic such as "the pivot of knowledge" "the educative aorta of the institution" "the heart of the institution" and so on.

Education passed on society's cultural values and accumulated a body of knowledge to the next generation (children) and to prepare them for a meaningful adult [13]. Imparting these society cultural values from generation to generation which is the major role of education is made possible because libraries are the centers for all cultural activities and conserve knowledge and ideas passed from generation to generation and the materials are arranged for present and future use. The library can be seen as an extension of education. Libraries improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for sustainable development. If education is to have a greater share in the molding and building of a happier individual and a better society, the providers of education must go further than their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of learners.

In fact, the library is to education, as the heart is to the body. As the heart pumps blood to the body so does the library pump information and learning materials to education. Education and libraries are interdependent on each other. Education without libraries and libraries without education are paralyzed. Hence it is an indispensable part of the educational sector.

## **5. LIBRARIES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

If we are to produce children who are self-reliant, and better able to fit into their immediate environment and interact successfully with the world at large, we need well developed and adequate libraries. According to [14] library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. One of the reasons why illiteracy rate is high in developing countries is because many people relapse into secondary illiteracy for what of adequate and relevant reading materials to sustain and consolidate the reading skills acquired in the classroom. Without any shadow of the doubt, the extent to which young people and workers of today will be creative, informed and knowledgeable will be shaped by the boundaries of the contents of the library resources available within their environment or community. A wide variety and plentiful supply of resources are required to encourage independent study so that young people or workers from an early age can learn how to think so that their convictions and views are formed as a result of active mental efforts. All these efforts can serve as solid foundation for the successful concept of sustainable development in Nigeria. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nigeria has experienced such a proliferation of books of all sorts that the nature of the librarian's work was radically altered, being well-read no longer a sufficient characteristic for the post. The library of today should no longer be a library of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century image. Today's library, especially academic, school, digital, national, special and public libraries to play their active roles as an educational tool to sustainable development must be well information systems. As pointed out by [15], the library of today should not merely store documents and preserve them; it must also devise means by which the contents of such documents can be rapidly and effectively transmitted for use. As far as the concept of sustainable development is concerned, information has always played a very important part in human life. For some people, libraries are so abstract that it cannot have any impact on their practical life. Consequently, such people believe that libraries are irrelevant to sustainable development. This misconception persists because of people's ignorance of what libraries are all about. They fail to realize that libraries are one of the most (if not the most) useful enterprises ever undertaken by man. This is

evidence by human development, which shows that libraries with its information have been the greatest force that has contributed in shaping human civilization.

There have been enormous advances in human knowledge since the last century. Every field of human endeavor has had a quantum leap in advancement, leading to many discoveries and inventions, two of which are the internet and cloning, with their use and abuse. Along with the new knowledge have come new challenges. And this new development has presented to the average citizen with a spectacle of the greatest confusion. People seldom stop to ponder that it is the business of libraries as an educational tool to bring order, clarity, and consistency into all this confusion. Here, libraries become "an instrument used to organize knowledge, proffer a focus and then give the individual a sense of direction out of a maze of confusion" [16]. A good well-equipped library is a sine qua non for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual inducement and elevation of the people of a community. Libraries are tool for the satisfaction of man's curiosity. There is a great desire by man to know things. This urge motivates them to satisfy their curiosity. Their curiosity is extended everywhere and into everything. It is bounded only by the limitation of their imagination [16]. Any effective and qualitative education depends on the library for its teaching, learning, research, consultation and expansion of knowledge. [17] stated that effective use of library is the bedrock of academic excellence. Thus the library is the most important resource in the pursuit of broad goals and objectives of educational institution. People acquire education through certain institutions, schools, agencies, welfare bodies, museums and organizations, and the library is the most outstanding of such institutions. A school, a club can never alone impart education, each of them is dependent upon a library-centre of wholesome education, and the quencher of thirst for concrete, fathomless, ultimate knowledge.

As pointed out by [18], it is generally known that library and information profession borrows from a number of disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, computer science, business management, mathematics, statistics, marketing, etc. thus, anything that impacts on any of these disciplines would have a direct influence on library and information science profession. Information and communication technology (ICT) has radically transformed most of the services provided by a library. ICT is heavily utilized in the

storage, processing and dissemination of information. Like a cyclone, the technology-driven environment has enveloped the library and is taken into unprecedented heights in knowledge acquisition, management, and communication. Even, the vocabulary of librarianship is changing: "dissemination" is being replaced by "communication" "repository" by "database", "literature" by "knowledge", "search" by "navigation", etc. This reflects current approach to packaging and the tools used for managing knowledge. Knowledge itself has become more ubiquitous than was ever imagined twenty years ago. Any modern library and information professional must be knowledgeable in library automation, networking, Internet surfing, database management, processing software, statistical software, etc. all these services, which must be made available in the libraries, can be regarded as necessary tools for developing country to engage herself in sustainability for that country to have a meaningful development. It must be realized that for a successful sustainable development concept, one does not have to leave the site of work before one could be professionally developed. It is imperative that a professional or a worker must keep pace with the latest development in the profession. For instance, the concept of "traditional librarian" is no longer tenable. Changes in the profession are happening both in magnitude and diversity. Correspondingly, the role of the librarian is changing. Thus librarian and other professional must transform themselves and the society through training and retraining in order to meet the expectations of their changing role. Professional development has been described as more or less a lifelong process, where individuals are exposed to changes all the time. Professional development or sustainability development is mainly for personal and career advancement and improvement of any organization. Librarians and other information specialists should pay particular attention to sourcing information such as notices for training programmes, professional meetings conferences/ seminars/ workshops, forthcoming events and job advertisements [19]. Hence, professionals do not need to wait for sponsorship before they can develop themselves and this can be done by cultivating the idea of making use of the library facilities in their environment.

Given the fact that the cost of training is enormous and only a few employers could afford to send staff on training on a regular basis, there

should be the possibility of improving one's career from one's workplace. This is why the importance of libraries in providing the enabling environment becomes important. Thus, realistically, professional development or concept of sustainable development would be enhanced if it is linked to work situation, that is, one does not have to leave the site of work before one could be professionally developed. As expected, libraries would always play a critical role sustainable development at all levels. Thus, libraries could promote the development of individuals or the concept of sustainable development through distance education, surfing the Internet and professional literature. All one needs in order to access the various sources or information are a computer with Internet access and web browser.

Policy makers in Nigeria need strong information base to discharge their duties and the level of decisions taken by the political class depends on how informed they are. Thus for national and sustainable development in Nigeria, policymakers in the democratic dispensation must be provided with valuable, timely and current information to facilitate decision-making process as Ogunsola in [3] opined that the level of policy formulation, policy errors have been attributed to inadequacy policy analysis and inaccurate and timely or non-available relevant information. There is need for libraries to be given a topmost attention, especially in government legislative councils for effective governance in Nigeria.

The realization of the importance of libraries has made many professional bodies and association including governments at all levels to establish their own libraries and information centers that would cater for the specific information needs and development of their members. The progress of any nation as pointed out by [20] depends on the development of its people through education. The development of education, on the other hand, may be said to be synonymous with the development of libraries and the library services within a given community. But libraries can only help about social development if and only when the people within communities make regular use of them. From the foregoing, it can vividly be seen that libraries have right from time aligned themselves with sustainable development of a nation. To this end, the extent of educational and sustainable development that libraries can bring about in any organization depends on the extent to which the

people utilize it. [21] demonstrated that the principal actors in the education industry are teachers, librarians, parents, youths, government and society at large. They further stated that education is a tool for growth and development. Since no modern society can function without an intensive use of books and information and libraries guarantee improved information services and national development. Therefore library is an educational tool for sustainable development.

## **6. PROBLEMS MILITATING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE OF LIBRARIES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Unfortunately, at present, the greatest challenge libraries face as an educational tool for sustainable development is high illiteracy rate and lack of reading culture. Most information is on print and most people cannot read and write. Justin Kiyimba in [2] went on to say that coupled with illiteracy is the fact that, even those who can read and write have little interest in reading. Other problems include:

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Studies have consistently reported inadequate levels of ICT facilities as one of the major problems facing libraries in Nigeria as they move into the 21st century. ICT infrastructure development and poor funding have been identified as problems, followed by poor ICT skills among staff [22; 23]. The culture of infrastructure development and maintenance is not widespread in Nigeria. Infrastructure is essential for delivery of library service to rural communities. According to [24], the major obstacle inhibiting efficient information services in rural areas are poor communication infrastructure and wide-dispersed rural population. For education to succeed in the developing world, it needs to build on another important pillar: the existence of infrastructure, along with some degree of connectivity [25].
- **Inadequate Human Resources:** We are at a point of change in the information economy of which libraries are a part [26]. Change is focused on innovation, technology, user experience, resource management, and service delivery. These changes can call for education and training of librarians and other library staff. The shortage of adequately trained staff in libraries is obvious. Education and

training for librarianship for sustainable development in Nigeria are inadequate and need radical restructuring to produce librarians suited to service in a knowledge-based society. At present, many libraries have inadequate numbers of staff, and many other have staff are seriously undereducated. If libraries in Nigeria are to play the role of education for sustainable development, they must invest in the intellectual capital of their employees. Technology used to access information can be a way to educate library staff, to provide resources and services required to bridge the information gap where necessary

- **Inadequate Funding:** A library may have the vision to carry out their services effectively, but lack of finance will pose a threat to the actualization of this dream. Many libraries in Nigeria cannot afford to purchase expensive materials, install computers and established an Internet connection, especially in remote areas. This was supported by [27] who stated that poverty is one of the most important barriers, especially due to the fact that ICTs are important and therefore relatively more expensive in Africa than in developed countries. The issue of inadequate funding is a big threat to libraries as a tool for sustainable development.
- **General low Perception of Library:** In Nigeria, it is common organizations, government ministries and parastatals a room set aside as or hall, cramped with some rickety, old tables, chairs and cupboards, put together a bizarre collection of books and magazines with a library inscribed at the door post. But this does not satisfy such institution's user needs Udensi 2010, in [3]. A look at the educational sector in Nigeria, shows that at all levels of Nigerian educational system, standard libraries are either non-existent or in a deplorable state [28]. Nigerian libraries lack adequate funding as less importance is attached to libraries. Though a good number of higher educational institutions have manageable buildings and library furniture, they lack books and journals which are essential core of library information [29].
- **Management Issues:** Electronic resources are not visible to the users as in traditional libraries where resources are physically available for browsing and use.

According to Chandel and Saikia, 2012 in [30] Libraries subscribe to the different packages of different publishers/vendors, as such information sources remain scattered which is not convenient to the users for browsing and searching. All such resources need to be integrated for access with a single stroke of key. Users neither have time nor patient for visiting a number of location of website or platform thus not utilizing the resources effectively to develop them.

Others are lack of viable publishing industry that can be publishing and providing survey reports, workshop reports, etc on local democratic and social-economic issues and epileptic power supply.

## 7. CONCLUSION

[2] asserts that information and a conducive environment of its free flow is a vital tool in all forms of human endeavour. It is a link pin of sustainable development. If sustainable development in Nigeria is to be sustained, citizens need to be constantly informed about information about and around them. This can be facilitated by the establishment of a quality library where citizens can access or have the information needed to develop themselves for future. Iloeje in [3] asserts that information is an important resource to human development and knowledge. It is evident from aforementioned that libraries play a significant role in educating the citizenry of a nation. Libraries are essential to our economic well being, the improvement of learning, meeting the challenges of information overload. If Nigeria can pay serious attention to education and libraries, she will overcome some of her problems and become one of the top 20 economies in the world in the year 2020.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above problems bedeviling our libraries as educational tool for sustainable development, this paper recommends that:

- Citizen, especially in remote areas, needs to acquire unhindered access to compulsory universal basic education (formal or informal) which in the process empowers them with information needed to sustain them in the global world.



- The government should re-assess and maintain enhanced quality and standard libraries of all types.
  - Librarians or information specialist in public libraries should organize regular workshops and seminars that will serve as educational forum where citizens irrespective of gender, age, profession can listen to information on social, economic, health agriculture or education to enable them to develop mentally and spiritually.
  - Adequate ICT and other educational facilities should be provided;
  - There should be steady power supply in the libraries for effective use of ICT facilities;
  - More classrooms and educational centers should be constructed among others.
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### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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