

ENHANCING PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION CENTRES IN ADAMAWA STATE-NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research work examined public libraries as a centre for education and community transformation. To highlight the potential of libraries, the study was guided by two research questions to determine how public libraries enhance community development and uproot challenges related to transforming public libraries in Adamawa state Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the research, with a population of 130 respondents drawn from the Adamawa State Library Board, and members of the host community. The instrument used to generate data is a questionnaire and the data generated was analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. The major challenges confronting the libraries include Inadequate funding, Poor ICT Skills by Staff, Poor Conditions of Service, etc. The conclusion briefly explains the usefulness of public libraries in society. The recommendation stressed that the state government should address staff training challenges in public libraries in the state, increase funding to them, and set mechanisms to ensure that funds reach the libraries and the libraries should utilize the funds adequately to provide effective community development and transformation among other recommendations.

Keywords: Libraries, Education, Center, Community, Transformation.

Introduction

A Library is an establishment set up mainly for the supply of basic and extended information services to its host neighbourhood, this may be a university, a college of education, a polytechnic as well as the public. A library can also be looked at as a compilation of information and educational facilities housed and fastened to provide for the basic information requirement of the community. According to Tochukwu, Adizetu and Boniface (2020), all over the globe, there are achievement stories of how different communities have been metamorphosed by some interest, services, and responsibilities of the library which have continued to project librarianship in a positive image. Libraries now comprehend their roles in streamlining access and sharing of ideas, and in assuming depositories for the government, immediate society, and other information-using components of the society.

Okafor (2020) argued that for an organization to survive, it has to realign itself not just to provide access to information, but to also provide services that create and refine the host community. They pinpointed seven ways libraries can become more community-centred institutions: as a “social center, a cultural rumination of the community, a center for viability, a community center for multifaceted populations, a center for the arts, a university, and as an advocate of youth”. Furthermore, the library can through its amenities refine arts appreciation and articulation by fostering the innovative life of the society. In recent years characterized by social inclusion, libraries must assume unique positions as spokespersons, especially for youths in deprived and poor communities. Finally, a community will persist in the digital era when libraries expand their priorities from information access to fixating innovatively on community building by delivering relevant services and schedules that meet community needs. In every community, libraries are an indispensable part of education structured to acquire, organize, preserve, and disseminate information resources to users. In this digital era with mobile devices and Internet bonding, users are now integrating data and information in libraries across the globe. In light of this, the library is one of the most vital modules needed for educational reform and national development due to its information facilities that guarantee the viability of all-round development (Omigie et al, 2023, Omeluzor & Ogo 2018). The purpose of this research is to assess and proffer solutions to the hurdles faced by libraries as educational transformation envoys in society.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the potential of libraries to serve as vital centers for community development and information transformation, the libraries are often constrained by limited funding and resources, which restricts their ability to expand services and invest in necessary technology and staffing hindering their ability to fulfil this role effectively. Additionally, many community members remain unaware of the diverse programs and resources available, leading to underutilization of library services. Finally, the lack of effective measurement tools makes it difficult for libraries to assess the impact of their initiatives, hindering their ability to demonstrate success and secure ongoing support. This confluence of challenges underscores the urgent need for strategic solutions to empower libraries as essential hubs for community development and information transformation, enabling them to meet the evolving needs of the communities they serve. Okuonghae (2018) agreed that the collective library's role is to deliver information to its community. The gaining of knowledge dispels obscurantism; therefore, the general objective of the library is to serve as a center for information where people can obtain the required knowledge to shrink their ignorance about their surroundings. It is on this basis that this research work is engaged for comprehensive analysis

Research Questions are;

1. What areas should the public libraries engage with to enhance community development and transformation in Adamawa State?
2. What are the challenges faced by the library in its effort at community transformation?

Literature Review

The position of librarianship in the reformation of academic society in Nigeria is palpable in the ways it educates professionals who handle information for national growth. Dispersal of knowledge has continuously been one of the public libraries' primary targets as long as they have catered as learning institutions, cultural archives, and research centers but in this digital age of erudition, they have to augment these roles and stop being inert repositories for printed resources. On the contrary, public libraries should advance their services and provide education of high quality by archiving resources in various forms and maintaining them easily accessible for online use among the community. However, due to stable changes in the environments where librarians work, the educational endeavors being incorporated into the training of library and information science (LIS) students in Nigeria have to be scouted. (Adebayo & Juliet 2019). Libraries are community nerve centers as they link people and

connect them to information. They are fortresses for kids, rendering after-school assignment help, games, and book clubs. They offer computer classes, letting older adults stay engaged in a digital world. Library bookmobiles and community outreach programs help those living in secluded areas and those who are confined to remain connected to the globe. Libraries are devoted to helping children and adults improve the skills needed to survive and excel in a global information community. The capacity to read and use computers is at the frontline of these skills. Basic, effective literacy is a crucial skill for personal and professional development. (American Library Association, 2024).

Librarians stand as educational advocates, organizing programs that go beyond mere book lending. They actively connect with communities to promote a love for reading. Revolutionary literacy initiatives, from tale hours for children to adult reading clubs, exhibit librarians' devotion to making reading reachable to all. Librarians don't only stock shelves; they compile diverse collections; safeguarding literature mirrors the intensity of the community it serves. Through collaboration with schools, librarians foster literacy as a partnership effort, broadening the love for reading beyond library walls. Libraries aren't static repositories; they're changing spaces promoting lifelong learning. Beyond books, they offer an array of resources, from online courses to workshops. Technology plays a pivotal role, with libraries providing computer access and digital resources, linking the digital divide for those seeking to promote their skills. Workshops on topics like financial literacy and coding showcase libraries as hubs for acquiring practical, real-world knowledge. Libraries adjust to societal shifts, endorsing new mediums like e-books and audiobooks, ensuring they remain pertinent in the ever-evolving environment of lifelong learning. Here are some examples of library schedules that effectively promote literacy and lifelong knowledge:

1. Libraries organize fascinating reading activities during the blaze to encourage children and adults alike to read, Librarians conduct participatory story time sessions for young children, promoting a love for books and reading,
2. Libraries host book clubs where members can converse literature, swap ideas, and develop acute thinking skills,
3. Librarians organize workshops on various disciplines, such as language learning, computer skills, and financial literacy, to empower adults, Librarians provide tutelage on digital skills, including web usage, online research, and using software programs

4. Libraries systematize reading challenges, inspiring participants to set reading goals and track their growth,
 5. Libraries beckon authors for talks and signings, encouraging a deeper acknowledgement of literature and the scripting process,
 6. Libraries anchor workshops on topics like scripting, tales by moonlight, and journalism to cultivate inventiveness and communication skills,
 7. Librarians convey books and educational equipment to underserved communities, promoting access to insight and learning,
 8. Libraries provide programs that entail both parents and children, enhancing family bonding through reading and learning together.
- (American Profession Guide, 2024)

Roles of Public Library in Educational Transformation

The library reforms communities by inspiring reading, expanding learning resources, developing learning skills, developing critical thought, developing values, and attitudes, and assisting with developmental tasks among others. Owing to its assets of materials and the learning chances it offers; the libraries can be seen to be ideally suited to the task of making education more applicable to current situations and more meaningful to the community. Key task a library ought to carry out trials to transform the community, these tasks include the following: -

1. **Higher education:** The role of higher education in community reformation is not unconnected to supporting education, teaching research, and trading by providing access to knowledge facilities, and materials and by providing referrals,
2. **User education:** In terms of user education, the library in its effort to promote community reformation can be involved in building good reading habits for students and members of the community, this can be attained by regular provision of reading facilities and making them readily accessible to the community,
3. **Recreation:** To encourage library use, the library has to furnish recreation to the community, this can be done by aiding the educational, civic, and cultural events of groups and organizations within the society when the community feels that the library is devoted to the cultural growth of the community then there is a high inclination for the community to accept transformation growth emanating from the book room.
4. **Societal and cultural role:** The most remarkable role of the library in community transformation can be attained in various perspectives which are

not limited to; the democratization of information and knowledge in society, connecting people to knowledge and information materials, giving under-privileged sections of the society consciousness about opportunities available in the society for their social and economic development, community information resources, community awareness about State programs such as mass literacy, coordinating cultural activities to promote social harmony such as book discussions, lectures on important topics that deal directly with community challenges, supporting the civic and cultural events of groups and institutions, knowledge preservation for successors, recording and preserving cultural knowledge as well as serving as a portal to the local and national government. (Murgan et al, 2018).

The Challenges Faced by the Public Libraries in Efforts toward Community Transformation

Some challenges are facing public libraries in their endeavour to provide educational reformative services to their users. Several problems are tormenting public libraries in Nigeria are in charge of providing efficient services to the users. Some of the challenges include

1. **Inadequate funding:** Inadequate funding is a grievous challenge distressing the activities of public libraries in Nigeria. The government does not fund the public library sufficiently and this has caused a lot of conundrums. It hinders effective and efficient service delivery. This problem can be connected to a lack of political will. Lack of political will can lead to negligence on the part of the government to fund public libraries properly; non-approval of the budget; and non-release or non-implementation of the budget (where approved).
2. **Poor ICT Skills by Staff:** The majority of the public library staff lack ICT skills. Inadequate levels of ICT literacy as one of the major problems facing public libraries in Nigeria, as they move into the 21st century, and poor ICT skills among staff have been identified as a problem.
3. **Ethnicity (tribalism) and Religion:** This problem exists in different degrees globally not only in Nigeria. Today, people are not employed based on confidence and merit but on “connections”. This causes drawback in action and inefficiency in any organization bearing in mind that one cannot give what he does not have.
4. **Poor Conditions of Service:** In some public libraries, there is insufficient staff simply because of poor conditions of service. Young librarians usually prefer employment in federal government-owned establishments for the following reasons: better salary, frequent promotion, and study

leave with pay that is not obtainable in public libraries. Poor conditions of service lead to poor staff employment which can hinder service delivery.

5. **Library Location and Difficulty in Extending Services to the Rural Areas:** In Nigeria, public libraries are located in urban areas. As a result, their services are limited to people who live in urban areas. The rural dwellers are not benefitting from public library services hence bookmobile services. Bookmobile was established to serve the public and disseminate knowledge to all, especially to those who find it difficult to resort to standard libraries due to social or geographic reasons health issues, or old age. The government established bookmobile services in the '60s and '70s however, this was not sustained in Nigeria due to certain factors like bad roads, long distances, and use of dilapidated vehicles. These services were kept in abeyance and they created a negative effect on public library service delivery. (Okafor, 2020).
6. **Scarcity of sufficient resources:** Information resources are not always available in the quality desired. Nigeria particularly is faced with a problem that researchers have identified as “Book Famine”. This means that information resources are scarce due to low publication output and where available, very costly. Nigeria is not likely to achieve meaningful development as the majority of her libraries, including academic libraries, are not adequately stocked with appropriate information resources and facilities. (Murgan and Murgan, 2018).

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design through the use of a qualitative research method. Surveys are effective for gathering information directly from your sample population. It's a common research plan those researchers across different industries, such as marketing, manufacturing, and technology employed. The questionnaire was used to solicit data from the respondents (Indeed, 2024).

The population of the study includes the staff of the Adamawa State Library Board and members of the public library host communities. The researchers adopted the stratified random sampling technique to select 30 Librarians and 100 community members from the host community' giving a total of 130 respondents which is made up of two strata; 95 males and 35 females.

Result and Discussion

The data was analyzed by using frequency and simple percentages. Results were also presented in tables. The percentage of respondents was used for simplifying and reducing the presentation of the raw data. These include the calculations of

percentages and tables that were necessary. A percentage of 99.9% - 50% was accepted as Very High (VH) and High (H) by respondents while 49.9% - 0.99% were considered as Low (L) or Very Low (VL) by the respondents. If the percentage of response rate from the research question table was 50% and above it was considered accepted while a percentage response rate below 50% was considered low. The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data are presented below.

Research Question 1: What areas should the public libraries engage with to enhance community development and transformation in Adamawa State?

Table 1: Responses of areas the public libraries should be engaged in, toward achieving community development and transformation

S/N	Community Transformation	VH	H	L	VL	Total
1	Organizing classes to educate housewives on issues bothering home and community development.	40 30.76%	70 53.84%	15 11.53%	5 3.84%	130 100%
2	Organizing group discussions for youths in other to educate them on reading habits and self-reliance.	85 63.38%	10 7.69%	20 15.38%	15 11.53%	130 100%
3	Organizing at intervals cultural fares to keep the cultural values of the community alive.	20 15.38%	18 13.84%	90 69.23%	2 1.53%	130 100%
4	Provision of information and recreational materials for the members of the community.	88 67.69%	30 23.07%	11 8.46%	1 0.76%	130 100%

Note: VH –Very high H – High L – Low VL - Very low

From Table 1 above, the respondents indicated that. Out of the 130 respondents, 70 respondents (53.84%) accepted that the library can transform the community by Organizing classes to educate housewives on issues bothering home and community development to a high extent. 85 respondents (63.38%) said that the library can transform the community by Organizing group discussions for youths in other to educate them on reading habits and self-reliance to a high extent, 90 respondents constituting 69.23% said that the library cannot use Organizing at intervals cultural fares to keep the cultural values of the community

alive for community transformation that means is stand rejected, while 88 respondents constituting (67.69%) think that the library can apply Provision of information and recreational materials for the members of the community to transform the community it to a very high extent which stands accepted.

Research question 2: What are the challenges faced by the public library in its effort to enhance community development and transformation?

Table 2: Responses on the challenges faced by the public library in its effort to enhance community development and transformation

S/N	Challenges	VH	H	L	VL	Total
1	Inadequate funding.	100	10	5	15	130
		76.92%	7.69%	3.84%	11.53%	100%
2	Poor ICT Skills by Staff.	17	8	22	83	130
		13.07%	6.15%	16.92%	63.84%	100%
3	Ethnicity (tribalism) and Religion.	74	33	4	19	130
		56.92%	25.38%	3.07%	14.61%	100%
4	Poor Conditions of Service.	65	28	9	28	130
		50.00%	21.53%	6.92%	21.53%	100%
5	Library Location and Difficulty in Extending Services to the Rural Areas.	103	10	0	17	130
		79.23%	7.69%	0.00%	13.07%	100%
6	Scarcity of sufficient resources.	5	6	8	111	130
		3.84%	4.61%	6.15%	85.38%	100%

Note: VH –Very high H – High L – Low VL - Very low

From Table 2 above, the respondents indicated that. Out of the 130 respondents, 100 respondents (76.92%) accepted that Inadequate funding is one of the different challenges facing library transformation to a high extent, 83 respondents (63.84%) think that most library staff have ICT skills that stand as rejected, 74 respondents constituting (56.92%) think that Ethnicity (tribalism) and religion is one of many challenges faces in the transformation process that considered accepted by respondents, 65 respondents constituting (50.00%) accepted that Poor conditions of Service are also part of the challenges, 103 respondents constituting (79.23%) have accepted that Library location and difficulty in extending services to rural areas are among the many challenges

faced by the transformation process of the library, while 111 respondents (85.38%) think that Scarcity of sufficient resources is not part of the problems faced by the transformation process.

Discussion of findings

The study revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that the library should organize classes to educate housewives on issues bothering home and community development, organize group discussions to educate youth on self-employment and reading habits, and Provision of information and recreational materials for the members of the community, which are considered accepted and scored above 50% while organizing at intervals cultural fares to keep the cultural values of the community alive remain rejected by the respondents who scored below 50% by the respondent. This is in line with the findings of. (American Profession Guide, 2024) in their paper titled “*Librarians’ Role in US Community Development and Outreach,*” they focused on achieving community development and transformation services. The study further revealed the challenges facing the library in its effort to provide services that will lead to community development and transformation including underfunding, Ethnicity (tribalism) and religion, Poor conditions of service, Library location, and difficulty in extending services to rural areas which are considered acceptable by the respondents who scored above 50% by respondents while scarcity of sufficient resources and Poor ICT skills by staff are not considered a challenge to the transformation process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the laws of librarianship states that the library is a growing organism and it is not a new thing to say the community is also a changing environment, the community of the 21st century is slowly doing away with old practices in terms of information delivery and concurrently community development, this means that the use of catalogue cards by libraries is being replaced by the use of online Public Access Catalogs i.e. (OPAC) in the same way the traditional ways of storytelling by librarians are changing to the use of the Internet to deliver information content right to the fingertips of the client, gadgets, and information sources such as Electronic books, E-journals, E-thesis, E- papers, Communication sharing software Electronic mail, Social Networks of Facebook, Twitter, Linked, etc. Sharing ideas, downloading and uploading YouTube, etc. are taking over the entire community's information delivery tactics therefore it is of utmost importance that libraries and librarians in their attempt to achieve community transformation, take these changes into cognizance to reach and sustain the intended goal. The study recommended that the Adamawa state

government should address staff training challenges in public libraries in the state, increase funding to them and set mechanisms to ensure that funds reach the libraries and the libraries should utilize the funds adequately to provide effective community development and transformation among other recommendations. There should be adequate provision of training facilities, with the knowledge that the satisfaction of library users depends not only on the space and the resources but also on the library staff. Through in-house training, webinars, workshops, and conferences, library staff are informed about library resources and programs and are guided on the best ways to provide and share these resources with library users. The human resource situations in public libraries in Adamawa State should be reviewed occasionally. Staff conditions of service, salaries, allowances, employment process, retirement, and others should be upwardly reviewed to motivate the staff and to also make public library jobs more attractive and should be provision of adequate equipment and facilities necessary for providing library services to users.

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