

**FUNCTIONALITY OF NATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LIBRARIES FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** Libraries in Nigeria contribute to educational development in the country. But this contribution is largely unrecognized by stakeholders in the educational industry. To bridge this gap, the current study analyses the quintessential and dogged contributions of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe towards the establishment of the National Library of Nigeria four years after the nation's Independence. The objective of this study is to analyse the functionality of national and institutional libraries for educational development in Nigeria. The literature on library and educational development has been extensively reviewed. The method of data collection used was the secondary method. Documents and other published materials as books, journals and newspapers provided the sources of the qualitatively collected and analysed data. The study revealed that libraries are among the most important necessities of educational development in Nigeria because they are repositories of organized and scientific knowledge. More so, there have not been adequate financial and material investments in the nation's library system, resulting in poor service delivery to end users and slowing down educational development in the country. Therefore, the study recommends that there should be more investments in both national and institutional libraries by both the government and individuals who have interests in library and educational provision.

**Keywords:** National Libraries, Institutional Libraries, Educational Development, Nigeria

## **INTRODUCTION**

It has come to the knowledge of all and sundry, national governments, international agencies, the private sector, and educated individuals, who have interest in library development, that library is the most important educational facility a nation can possess and that no nation can actualize its dreams of human, political, economic, social, scientific, industrial and technological development without the provision and institutionalization of a functioning and functional national library system (Emojorho & Ukpebor, 2013). A library is defined simply as "a building or room containing collections of books, periodicals, and sometimes films and recorded music for use or borrowing by the public or the members of an institution such as a university". According to the New World Encyclopaedia, a library is "a collection of information, sources, resources and services, organized for use, and maintained by a public, an institution, or a private individual". In a more traditional sense, it means a collection of books. This collection and services are used by people who choose not to – or cannot afford to – purchase an extensive collection themselves, who need material that no individual can reasonably be expected to have, or who requires professional assistance with their research.

A national library is a library established by the central government in a federal system of government such as Nigeria, to provide unrestricted access to information resources free of

charge to the residents of a given community or citizens in general. A national library is usually, a public library. This means that it is always open to the general public, the young, the old, literate and nonliterate for use at any time. Unlike other types of libraries, public libraries are not restricted to any group of users, and collections are developed to reflect the diversity of their clientele (Okafor & Nwako, 2020). National libraries are established by the government with taxpayer money and operate under the provisions of the extant laws and constitution of the land. In Nigeria, the National Library has its head office in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, with branches in the 36 states of the federation.

In a broader sense, national libraries may be used to describe all publicly owned libraries that exist in a nation or country, including those built by component states or local governments, and it is in this second sense that this paper conceptualizes national libraries. In the same vein, National libraries draw support from other libraries owned by Institutions of Higher Learning in the country or State. Institutional libraries also provide access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a range of services to students and academics in higher education institutions (Ekong, in Ezekwe & Muokebe, 2011). According to IFLA/UNESCO (2011), public libraries are built to provide knowledge to all people and sundry regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, linguistic and cultural identity, economic status and educational attainment. The worldwide library system is a major tool for the educational development of a nation. This is because knowledge is transient and can be acquired, developed, stored, and taught from generation to generation.

Events around the globe have shown that the development of any nation, either on economic, political, social or technological fronts, is squarely dependent on the type of educational system prevalent in that nation. The story of a nation's education cannot be complete without mention of its library system. No nation can grow without a sound library system. The development of libraries in any country is critical for socioeconomic transformation, especially during the 21<sup>st</sup> century when access to information and knowledge underpins development (Chisita & Chibanda, 2020). This is because knowledge is stored, housed, preserved and retrieved from the library. Libraries retain knowledge stored for many centuries and make it relevant for present and future use.

The International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) launched the Global Project in 2017 as a way of strengthening libraries throughout the world. The project has seen over 190 countries participating worldwide. For most nations, especially those in the developing world, this has created platforms for strong and united library associations that are powering literate, informed and participative societies. Some countries in Africa, including Zimbabwe have taken the initiative to participate in the IFLA Global Vision (Chisita & Chibanda, 2020). This article studied the factors affecting the functionality of national and institutional libraries in Nigeria. It also tries to explore how the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the supervising ministry (Ministry of Information) has contributed to a unified library system through collaboration.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are myriads of challenges facing educational development in Nigeria which can be said to stem from both institutional and other environmental factors. Topmost on the list of problems faced by the Nigerian higher education sector include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, poor remunerated academics, outdated curriculum, bureaucracy, and insecurity among others.

Funding is one of the major issues faced by educational institutions in Nigeria. Most activities in the educational sector depend largely on the availability of finances to function well. Projects as building construction, including lecture halls, halls of residence, laboratories, libraries and workshops, procurement of teaching aides and staff emoluments all depend on the availability of funds. Funds are grossly in very limited supply for the institutionalization of a virile educational system.

In terms of infrastructure, facilities needed in the academic environment which are always out of the reach of an average user include: clean water, electricity, a good road network, learning aids such as pews, audio-visual equipment, recreational facilities and availability of Internet. Just a few higher institutions in Nigeria can boast of the possession of one or two of these infrastructure. If the first generation Universities in the country such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife and the University of Ibadan (UI), still lack round-the-clock electricity supply and clean water on their campuses, what more can be said of the new Universities established mainly to calm frayed political nerves?

Poor remuneration of lecturers and other staff of higher Institutions in Nigeria has become a telling comment for educational development in Nigeria. Nigerian University lecturers are among the least paid academics in the world. The highest paid professor in a Federal University in Niger earns less than \$600 equivalent in Naira per month. This is not up the amount paid to a Graduate Assistant in European Universities and even in many 3<sup>rd</sup> World nations.

Furthermore, the curriculum in use in Nigeria has been described by most Intellectuals as outdated and obsolete. This is because the curriculum is not attuned to current developments, innovations and dynamic needs of the changing global World. Even the newly introduced CC Max curriculum that is intended to correct some of the ills of the now, obsolete B Max curriculum has received mountainous criticisms as being ill conceived and poorly packaged. Poor implementation of educational policies owing to bureaucratic bottlenecks, red tape, inertia and corruption which in many ways, fester insecurity of life and property, all combine to exert centrifugal pressure on the educational development of the country.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions have been drawn from the problem of the study.

1. How has the government improved educational development through the institution of functional national and institutional library systems in Nigeria?
2. To what extent can a functional library system improve educational development in Nigeria?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is as follows:

To assess the functionality of national and institutional libraries for educational development in Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To explain how the government has improved educational development through the establishment of national and institutional libraries in Nigeria

2. To reveal how a functional library system can improve educational development in Nigeria.

### **Significance of the Study**

The theoretical significance of the study underscores the study's imperative in adding to the theoretical knowledge about library and information sciences. The invaluable outcome of this study would benefit students, academics, policymakers and librarians, both within and outside the country when conducting research on national and institutional libraries.

Empirically, the study is valuable because of its practical application to library and information science practitioners, for solving practical social problems confronting the development and usage of libraries and information management.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The concept of a library**

The term "library" seems to have assumed different meanings from the brick-and-mortar public library to the digital library. Etymologically, the word library came from an Anglo-French word, *librarie* and a Medieval Latin *librarium*, from a *libr* or *liber*-meaning inner bark, rind, or book. Library is no longer a strange or new word to the public in general. It is a professional agency saddled with the selfless responsibility of problem-solving and discovering new knowledge in various careers/professions, through the provision of information, which is carefully selected, acquired, processed, preserved and disseminated in diverse formats to respective users (Idogbe & Philip, 2020). This can be actualized irrespective of their geographical location. Hence, the concept of a library has changed from what the majority know it to be, to a more professional meaning in terms of combining both the early traditional function of being custodians of books and other print materials, to technology-based resources.

Merriam-Webster defines a Library as "a place in which literary musical, artistic, or reference materials (such as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) for use but not for sale are kept". The Dictionary goes further to describe the library in a Morgue sense as "a series of related books issued by a publisher". In this sense, one can talk for example, of a Dickson's Library: a collection of publications on the same subject, or a collection of cloned DNA fragments that are maintained in a suitable cellular environment and that usually represent the genetic material of a particular organism or tissue.

George Eberhart offers his definition of a Library in the Librarian's Book of Lists (Chicago: ALA, 2010) as "a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information, professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programmes (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole".

Another general definition of a Library is from the Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS). Library – from the Latin *liber*, means "book". In the Greek and Romance languages, the corresponding term is bibliotheca. In Swedish, it is *bibliotek*, and in Finnish, it is *Kirjosto* – a collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non-

print materials organized and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc). Institutional libraries, organized to facilitate access by a specific clientele, are staffed by librarians and other personnel trained to provide services to meet users' needs. Libraries can also be taken to mean by extension, the building, room or facility that houses such a collection, usually but not necessarily built for that purpose. A Library is a platform where people meet to research and share ideas on critical issues affecting society; therefore, it is a knowledge space that is both larger and more general than those shared by any single discipline or affinity group (Omeluzor, 2013; Idogbe & Philip, 2023).

### **Nigerian Library in Development**

Development means many things to many people depending on their perceptions and disciplines. Adetiba (2013) reported that the meaning a person attaches to a term or concept depends on the person's idiosyncratic view of the sociopolitical and economic world. According to Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), development embodies all attempts to improve human conditions. Development can be defined as movement along a trajectory leading to growth (Ezeanyika, 2008). It is the "improvement ... of the social and material conditions for life" (Kingsbury, as cited in Appleby, 2010). The concept appears broad and contentious, making a comprehensive definition more elusive. International aid for development which originated in Britain (Kanbur, 2006) has been largely driven by the interests of the Northern Hemisphere and has spread over time in line with changing philosophies (Lawson, 2007). Similarly, the field of international development organizations is a fragmented ecosystem with numerous players (Ingram & Lord, 2019) with priorities that change to align with the latest sociopolitical trends. While some agendas look to partnerships with local institutions to increase local ownership of development such as the UN, critiques are of the view that these relationships remain opaque, and the desired qualities of an ideal "development partner" shift over time in accordance with political agendas (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010; Lynch et al, 2021). For libraries hoping to gain a foothold as recognized players in the field of development, this unstable ground is daunting if not insurmountable.

Nevertheless, the work that National libraries do patches the goals of development agencies' programmes such as the United Nations' SDGs. From educational programming (Mahwasane, 2017) to community health (Emojorho & Ukpebor, 2013) to expanded access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Sears & Cradall, 2010) libraries and development organizations share common goals that make them development partners. However, Nigerian libraries have not historically been perceived as partners by the international development community (Fellows et al, 2012). In Nigeria, libraries have always been left out from both the World Bank's strategic plan for education and successive regime programmes on education in the country, despite the natural connection between schools and libraries. Even where it has successfully been argued that libraries should be added, specific plans for library development are also notably absent from the country's Vision 2030 Development plan, despite an emphasis on "equal access to knowledge," to transform Nigeria to a knowledge-based economy. Although the situation of libraries varies across different states of Nigeria, they tend not to play central roles in long-term national development plans (Benson et al., 2016) which is both a symptom and a cause of the lack of awareness of libraries in educational development.

Unfortunately, the discrepancy between the potential of libraries and their lack of visibility is not new. Libraries in Nigeria and even most other African countries have historically fought an uphill task, between the national stakeholders and the communities they serve but not fully



embraced by either. Many library and information science scholars traced these issues to the colonial history of African libraries. Despite rich traditions of oral librarianship across the continent (Amadi, 1981), the libraries established by colonial administrations emphasized text-based practices and were built to replicate European ideals, and this model gradually became accepted as the standard for modern African Libraries (Mostert, 2001, Nyana, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a historical analysis of the Nigerian government at instituting a functional national and institutional library system for the development of the national educational system in the country. The data were sourced through secondary sources including library materials such as books, journals, periodicals and internet sources, and were analysed qualitatively through logical interpretation of the contents of the sourced documents.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

The data presented and analysed here involve an attempt to answer the research questions posed in the first section of this study.

### **Government Support for Educational Development through the Institution of a Functional National and Institutional Library System in Nigeria**

Historically, it has been speculated that the educational development of any country to a large extent depends on the development and functionality of the nation's library, both the national library and those owned by academic institutions in the country. This section attempts to coherently capture the immense contributions of one of Africa's foremost nationalists and pan-Africanists, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, to the development of libraries in Nigeria. Although he is better known for his achievements in politics and journalism, Dr Azikiwe saw the library as a vehicle for the emancipation of Nigerians from the pangs of colonial rule (Aguolu, 1980).

As the indigenous Governor-General and first president of Nigeria, Zik was able to muster enough courage and political will to influence legislation for public library development in Nigeria, the establishment of the University of Nigeria library named after him - and the eventual creation of the National Library of Nigeria (Aguolu, 1980).

Dr Azikiwe was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1904, and he became the first indigenous Governor-General (1960 – 1963), and the first civilian president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1963 – 1966), and died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 1996 (Aguolu, 1980). A very articulate and potent force in the achievement of Nigerian independence in 1960, and endowed with an unusual, if not a mythical, combination of enviable qualities, he was widely regarded as Nigeria's greatest orator, and excelled in sports, journalism, politics, and authorship (Aguolu, 1978). He received his university education in the U.S., attending Columbia, Lincoln, and Pennsylvania Universities, where he studied anthropology, religion, economics, political science, and journalism. For a brief period (1925–1934), he was an instructor in political science at Lincoln University before returning to Africa.

Thompson has enunciated, in *A History of Principles of Librarianship*, three basic principles: (1) libraries are subject to political, social, and economic processes operating in society; (2) library development, in general, fluctuates with the rise and decline of learning; and (3)

librarians, however influential they may be, have no power over the ultimate existence of the libraries they manage. The society that created the libraries may conserve or destroy them.

Thus, the return of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe to Nigeria in 1937 was a turning point, not only in Nigeria's political history but also in its educational and library history, as shown by his words and actions from the 1930s to the 1960s. At his death in May 1996, there was a sudden deluge of writings on his contributions to politics, journalism, and sports, but there was no mention of his outstanding contributions to the development of libraries in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper is to identify and elucidate these contributions, which are still either incoherently documented or scattered among various sources. This is the first attempt at crystallizing the enormous contributions of this intellectual and political giant - Zik of Africa - to Nigerian library development.

In 1939, the Carnegie Corporation sponsored a survey of the library needs of British West Africa, which was undertaken by Margaret Wrong and Hans Vischer, two years after the return of Dr Azikiwe to Nigeria. The survey report indicated that there was a lack of interest in libraries in Nigeria. In 1939, of the 152 subscribers to the Lagos Library, only seven were Africans and 145 were Europeans. Azikiwe had been very critical of the Lagos library service as highly discriminatory - a reminder of the racist practices he had experienced in the United States. The few Africans who could use the library were "those with sufficient Western education, social standing, and connections not to feel out of place in such a milieu... it provided valued recreation for the British administrative and professional class and for their wives and an even tinier group of Nigerians of similar background and mind."

Nevertheless, in 1940, the Carnegie Corporation made financial grants to Nigeria for library development. Table 4.1 provides an overview of financial grants to Nigeria from 1932 to 1959—a year before Nigerian independence.

**Table 1: Carnegie Grants to Nigeria, 1932 – 1959\***

<b>Purpose of Grant</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Grant (in U.S.\$)</b>
1. Library Development	1932	\$6,000.00
2. Books for Schools and Colleges	1940	\$3,000.00
3. Purchase of Books for Lagos Public Libraries	1940	\$27,323.00
4. Regional Libraries and Reading Rooms	1940	\$1,412.00
5. Library of Congress Catalogue and Supplement for University College, Ibadan	1951	\$1,126.00
6. Purchase of Books for the Library of Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology	1954	\$10,000
7. Library Training Course at the University College, Ibadan	1959	\$88,000.00
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$136,861.00</b>

\*Florence Anderson, Carnegie Corporation Library Program, 1911–1961 (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1963: 99, Culled from Aguolu, 1980).

Paradoxically, the establishment of the Standing Committee to Advise Government on Provision of Libraries by the Colonial Government in 1940 could be regarded as a concession to local aspirations. Malcolm MacDonald, British Colonial Secretary, wrote on 8 November 1939 to Sir Bernard Bourdillon, Governor of Nigeria, that he would support anything that would promote literacy and intelligent reading among Nigerians, provided the necessary funds “could be made available from non-government sources — I do not wish to give the impression that I should desire colonial governments to incur themselves more than a small outlay upon the subject at the moment.”

The colonial administration was ready to spend money on libraries given by the Carnegie Corporation, but hardly any from its purse. However, the special condition of the Carnegie grants was that their recipients would be prepared, after the grants were exhausted, to continue to finance the projects for which the grants were originally made. The reply of the colonial governor in Lagos to the British colonial secretary inevitably brought Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe into an open confrontation.

### **Role of National and Institutional Libraries**

Libraries, whether national or institutional, perform vital functions for educational development in every nation. The manifesto of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Social Organization (UNESCO) (1995) expressly stated that “the public library shall in principle be free of charge and services shall be provided based on equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, nationality, language or social status”. To provide equal access to users of library services and material, up-to-date facilities must be established and certain services and materials provided for users who for one reason or another cannot use regular services and materials, e.g., linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, hospitals or prisons (Nwafor et al, 2015; Okafor, 2020).

National and institutional libraries perform the same functions: the difference is the scope or coverage. The national library has the general public as its potential users and therefore, does not restrict its material and resource provision to any particular group or class in society. Institutional libraries, being special purpose libraries, source and preserve materials specially tailored towards the specific purposes of the institution. For instance, the university library is a good example of an institutional library.

National and institutional libraries have the responsibility of providing timely, accurate, pertinent and reliable information in various areas of human endeavours to library users through materials that communicate the experience and ideas of people, making them easily and freely available to all people.

Libraries provide comfortable physical and virtual spaces for academic communications and interactions. It provides access to all kinds of information to ensure intellectual freedom and cultural and personal development (LRCN, 2015). Libraries help in the preservation and development of the sociopolitical, economic, cultural and technological heritage of the people which translate to national development and improvement of the general quality of life of the people (Laspinas, 2014). They are established to meet the needs of children and young people to encourage and strengthen the formation of reading habits through the provision of excellent fiction and general-interest materials. Libraries provide recreational facilities for leisure, which improves health and engenders communal life. Schoenbrum (2017) added that libraries have



the mandate to drive education for national development by implementing their core function, which is to provide a conducive place for citizens to access a broad range of information.

### **Conclusion**

It is taken for granted that national and institutional libraries and their resources are critical agents of educational development, not only in a particular nation but also worldwide. The library harbours varied intellectual materials that are relevant and required in different professions that citizens can consult, to improve their knowledge for the growth and development of a nation.

Although the scope of responsibilities of the national library may vary with those of other countries, it has grown out of the awakening national consciousness, embodied and powerfully expressed, since 1937 when Zik returned to Nigeria from the United States to 1964, when the National Library of Nigeria was legally established while he served as the first president of the Republic of Nigeria.

It is intriguing that the National Library, whose movement dates from the 1940s, could only be established four years after Nigerian independence when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe had enough political clout as the Governor-General to win the support of the Prime Minister of Nigeria, who was the executive head of the government. At every turn of events in the library's evolution, as the political influence of Dr Azikiwe grew, the impact of his support on establishing the Library was discernible. Zik saw the National Library as an evergreen tree of knowledge that could, in such a complex, pluralistic society as Nigeria, contribute to building a richer and better social order, thus serving as a principal instrument in weaving the tapestry of the country's multi-ethnic and cultural pluralism. The work concludes that there is no development or modernization in practical terms without directly impacting people, which is the major reason libraries; channel their services toward people of all careers and backgrounds.

### **Recommendations**

Having provided details in the body of this paper on the roles of national and institutional libraries in educational development, it can therefore be deduced that libraries are the real agents of educational development in the nation and therefore, require adequate and faster attention from the federal and component state governments in Nigeria.

1. The Nigerian Government should continually ensure the standardization of its libraries, particularly, libraries serving the general public by providing necessary facilities and resources, and ensuring that the libraries are managed by qualified professionals.
2. The government should leverage the digitalisation of the of the public library system to improve the educational system in Nigeria.
3. The government should ensure that every educational institution in Nigeria, from the elementary to the university level, has a suitable digital library with recent books and archival materials. This will improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools and help to develop the nation's indigenous knowledge.
4. Library staff should be given periodic training on dynamic Information and Communication Technology.

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