

Higher Education, Libraries, and Nigeria Government's Vision 20-2020 Project

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Abstract

This study explored the role of higher education and libraries in attaining the vision 20:2020 of the Nigerian Government. The study utilized the purposive sampling method to select 300 educationists and librarians in Niger Delta Region of the country. It was found that Nigerian libraries are greatly under stocked, and internet services are lacking in the library. It was moreover discovered that librarians lack adequate skills to render effective services to support the human capital target of vision 20:2020 of the federal government, and Nigerian libraries are grossly under funded. It was recommended that Nigerian Government should prioritize the development of internet services in all higher institution and public libraries to enable them support the vision; librarians should engage in ICT training; higher institutions in Nigeria should come up with an ICT/library development policy which must include how the library should be funded; and the public and the private sector should come together in partnership to ensure that libraries are adequately funded.

Keywords: Human Capital Development, Higher Education, Libraries, Nigeria: Vision 20:2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human survival can only be quickened with full access to the past intellectual contributions of scholars as well as being up to date with the growing and ever adding knowledge. Libraries are established to provide access to the past and present in order to overcome life's present challenges through access to past and present records of human intellectualism. Libraries have now become integral parts of modern societies and their contributions are more in the areas of education, information and development. The format of library resources is changing rapidly as more and more technological innovations emerge. With the introduction of the internet and the World Wide Web for instance, information has become more accessible than in the print regime, and it is now considered a key resource and asset in every aspect of life. Information resources available in modern day libraries include e-journals (current and archives), e-books, wiki resources, reports, websites, newspapers, reference resources, virtual library resources etc. According to Grillon the entrance into the information age has had many impacts on our way of life [1]. One of these

impacts is the changes in information storage and retrieval. The jobs and functions performed by all and sundry are becoming increasingly information dependent. Nowadays, we are living in an information economy where information is the key resource and the library is charged with the responsibility of providing information.

The Library is a formal institution responsible for selecting, acquiring, processing or organizing, storing, retrieving information resources by using both manual and computerized methods. Many Libraries around the world store large amounts of information resources in different formats such as printed (books) and non-print (electronic) materials in different subject areas or disciplines. The challenge of making these materials available to library patrons is the essence of cataloguing and classification of library materials. Thus, in the bid to facilitate the retrieval of materials, the library design tools such as the library catalogue, the online public access catalogue (OPAC), shelf lists, indexes and abstracts, bibliographies etc., through which documents can be accessed via the author's name, title of the work, or the subject of the document. These retrieval tools

contain surrogates of information resources or documents that make up the library collection, which aid their retrieval.

The importance of libraries in education cannot be successfully underestimated. Education as a key component for human capital formation is recognized as being vital in creating the productive capacity of people. Education contributes directly to economic growth by making individual workers more productive and indirectly by leading to the creation of knowledge, ideas, and technological innovation. It is the library that provides the platform for education to thrive by making information resources readily accessible to teachers and students alike. This paper seeks to find out if the material stock, ICT infrastructure, librarian ICT skills, and funding of libraries in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region is adequate to provide effective services for the attainment of the 20:2020 vision of the federal government.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Though, education is recognized as the only instrument through which the society can be transformed, the library is the central nervous system of the educational sector. According to Anyira *et al.*, [2] research and library are not mutually exclusive. Sadiq [3] posited that no good research is possible without a good library. This is because the library provides the needed required materials, data, information, and literature for research. The library provides research facilities and resources, and in addition renders technical information services.

As a matter of fact, no nation's higher education can effectively be developed without its library first of all being developed. This is because the library is responsible for providing information resources that aid learning. This prompted Akingbola [4] to state that human capital development pre-supposes investment activities in library development and processes that produce knowledge, skills, health or values that are embodied in people. Therefore, library development is bedrock for education advancement and human capital development.

But, it was stated by Oladoyin and Dauda [5] that in the early 1970s Nigeria had a lot to spend as a result of the oil windfalls which accounted for the upsurge in the number of educational institutions and flourishing library services during the period. However, they stated that since the advent of democratic regime in 1999, successive Nigerian governments have underscored the need to invest substantially in library services and the educational sector in general. According to them, the Nigeria's educational system (including library institutions) was also accompanied by structural defects, inefficiency and ineffectiveness which today place the country at its lowest ebb in human capital development and utilization. The educational system tended to produce more of those who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vibrant. The emphasis has been on linear expansion in the size of the educational system as well as libraries without any broad and dynamic conception of the qualitative dimensions of the system. The result of this include, lack of adequate material for research, lack of deployment of information and communication technology, brain drain, poor ICT skill, under funding and mismanagement of financial resources [6]. All these underscore the fact that libraries in Nigeria, the Niger Delta Region especially, are incapacitated to support education to produce the desired results in human resource development.

In spite of the gains derivable from quality education and library services, the sector continues to face a number of critical problems, Odukoya [7] stated that poor funding of libraries in Nigeria has resulted to unpaid salaries, degradation of library facilities at all levels, incessant strike actions and industrial unrests, which have culminated into increased rate of illiteracy. In addition, non-implementation of visions and plans especially the non-remittance of 10% of the re-current budget of every University to the library for development attests to the fact that libraries in Nigeria are facing critical challenges.

Notwithstanding, Anyira [8] revealed that the current curriculum is no longer adequate for training the 21st

century librarians. He also identified other challenges to include lack of ICT skills among librarians, and fear of job loss as a result of ICT deployment. Furthermore, Odukoya (2009) reported that Nigeria tertiary institutions are experiencing acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities across all levels of higher education. Besides, he further noted that frequent changes in government negatively affect the education system in general. In line with this, Professor Ajayi, one time provost of Federal College of Education Osiele, Ogun State observed that “within the eight years (1991-1999) that I served as Provost, the nation passed through five different regimes (Babangida in 1993; Shonekan for less than four months in 1993; Abacha 1993-1998; Abubakar 1998-1999; Obasanjo 1999-2007). Within this period, I had to operate fewer than eight different ministers of education. The same thing happened at the state level. Each of the Presidents, Ministers, Governors, Commissioners, had their own different conception and policies on education that they tried to implement during their tenure. With such instability in the system of governance, coupled with constant changes, one should not be surprised at the level of crisis the nation's education system has witnessed over the years and the inconsistency and often contradictory nature of the educational policies. It is one step forward and two steps backward”. Instability in government affects Nigerian Libraries and higher education because they are mostly funded by the government. Only private institutions are spared to some extent.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive survey method was used in the study. The questionnaire and interview were used to obtain data from respondents. The purposive sampling method was used to select 300 librarians and educationists in higher institutions of learning and public libraries in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Data were analyzed with simple percentage count.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

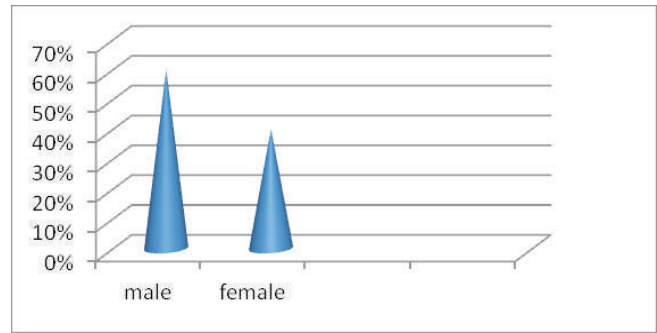


Fig. 1 Sex distribution of the respondent

The Figure 1 shows that 60% of the respondents are male, while 40% of them are female.

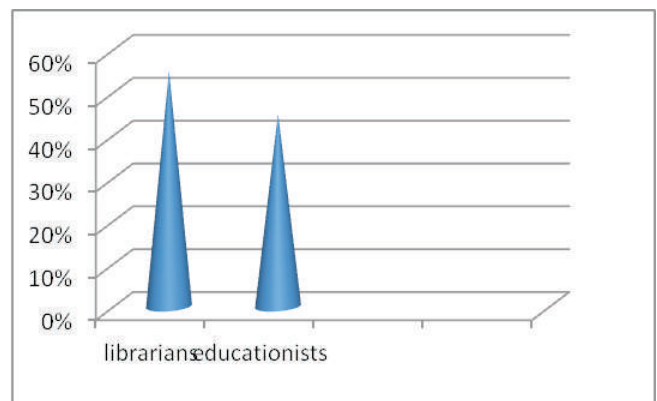


Fig.2 Profession of the respondents

The Figure 2 shows that 55% of the respondents are librarians, while 45% of them are educationists.

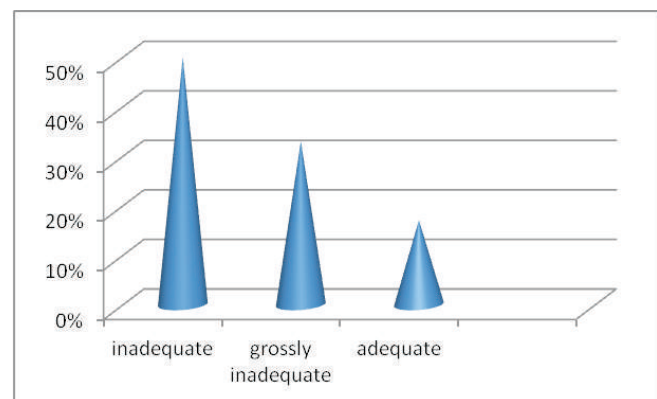


Fig. 3 Adequate of the library resources

The Figure 3 shows that 50% of the respondents said their library has inadequate materials, 33% of them said grossly inadequate, while 17% said they have adequate materials.

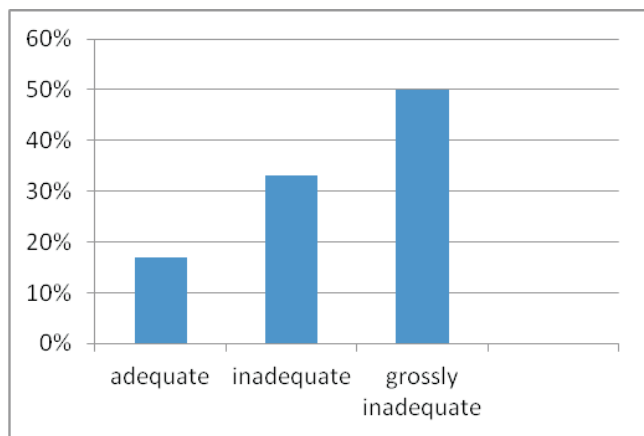


Fig. 4 Level of adequacy of Internet facilities in the libraries

The Figure 4 shows that 50% of the respondents said that ICT is grossly inadequate in their library, 33% of them said it is inadequate, while 17% said they have adequate ICT facilities.

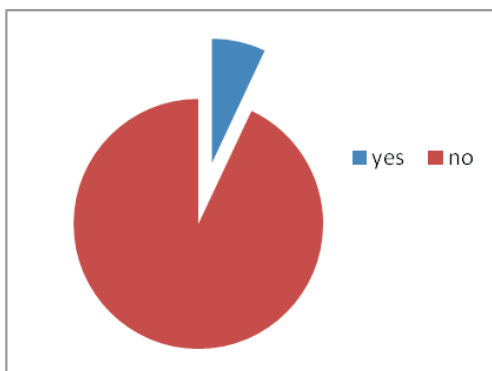


Fig. 5 Effective services are rendered with library ICT infrastructure

The Figure 5 shows that 93% of the respondents said that their ICT infrastructure is not enough to render effective services, while 7% of them said that it is enough to render effective services.

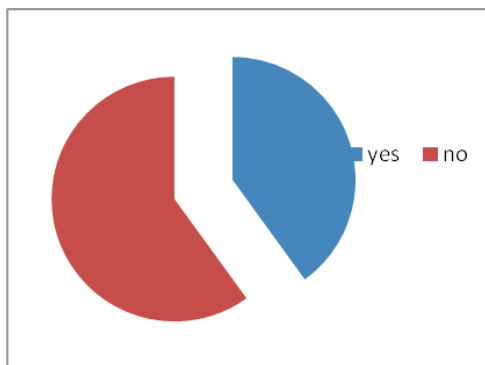


Fig. 6 Adequate skills to render effective library services

The Figure 6 shows that 60% of the respondents said that librarians do not have adequate skills to render effective services to clients, while 40% of them said that librarians have adequate skills.

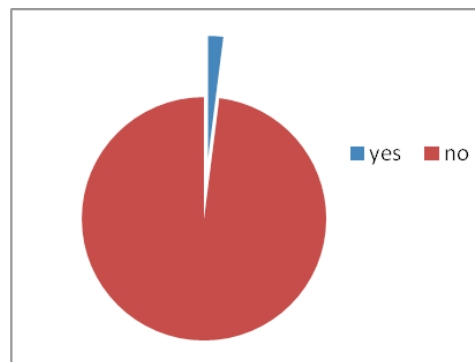


Fig. 7 Present level of funding is adequate for effective library services

The Figure 7 shows that 98% of the respondents agreed that the present level of funding is not adequate for effective library services, while 2% of them said that it is adequate.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

It was found that Nigerian libraries are greatly under stocked. It was also found that internet services are lacking in the library. It was discovered that librarians lack adequate skills to render effective services to support the human capital target of vision 20:2020 of the federal government. Nigerian libraries are grossly under funded.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not possible to attain vision 20:2020 without the library providing information support. Nigerian libraries are greatly incapacitated to provide support for the development of manpower target of the vision. There is therefore funding implication which falls directly on funding authorities responsible for providing funds for acquiring library materials, and deploying library ICT. There is also implication for the librarians responsible for providing information to the community as they stand the threat of becoming irrelevant as a result of lack of skills. Policy implication will also arise as it is highly important to guide the development of libraries and the provisions of services.

It was therefore recommended that:

1. There is an urgent need for Nigerian Government to prioritize the development of internet services in all higher institution and public libraries to enable them support the vision.
2. There is the need for librarians to engage in ICT training aimed at acquiring sound ICT skills to take full advantage of the numerous information resources on the internet.
3. There is a need for higher institutions in Nigeria to come up with an ICT/library development policy which must include how the library should be funded.
4. There is a need for public and private sector to come together in partnership to ensure that libraries are adequately funded.

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