

Revitalizing Delta State Public Libraries for National Development: The Role of The State Government

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Abstract

The study investigated the revitalization of public libraries in Delta State, Nigeria and the role the state government can play on this, since all the public libraries belong to her. The descriptive survey research was employed and the population was made up of 60 senior staff of seven (7) public libraries in the state. A self developed questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents and data analyzed using mean scores. From the data collected, it was evident that Delta State public libraries need revitalization and the role of the government among other things include training and retraining of staff, acquisition of current information resources, automating the libraries to join the trend. The study also recommended that the state government should appreciably fund the public libraries and the staff should introduce programmes that can attract users to the libraries.

Key Words: *Delta State, Public Libraries, Revitalizing, Availability, Utilization*

Introduction

Development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. (Dikenwosi, 2014). National development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. National comes from the word Nation, a phenomenon that embraces the whole nation and development is the improvement of the national well being of all citizens. On this vein, Unoma (2014) likens national development as a process of building a nation to enhance the quality of the people and at same time bring about national unity. Osuya and Okochi, (2014), Obaro & Ekeno (2023) opine that any country that wants development should attend basically to its educational development as human capital development. To a country like Nigeria, Education should be given a place in the country's development blue print. Education has been described as the bedrock of development and is incomplete without libraries. Buttressing on this, Obaro & Umusor, (2021) noted that the essence of libraries in national development cannot be farfetched. They wrote that before any institution of higher learning can face and succeed with accreditation, its library must be suitable. Similarly, public libraries are avenues to satisfy any citizens intellectual curiosity irrespective of color, language, religion and gender.

There are six types of libraries namely –National library, which is the focal point for overall library and information services in the country. We also have the Academic libraries which are libraries that exist in Institution of higher learning. The school libraries are libraries found in pre-primary, primary and post primary schools. There is also the special libraries which are libraries belonging to establishments. Also are private libraries owned by individuals to suit them? But the focal point of this study is the public libraries. Public libraries are libraries owned by the state government, their information resources are made freely available to all. They have been in existence in Nigeria since 1953. But a pilot study conducted by the researcher shows that they need revitalization. Revitalization here connotes giving a new life, and moving the libraries to more attractive states comparatively, and rousing them to be more successful than they are (Obaro, 2023) hence this study.

Statement of Problem

Nigeria at independence in 1960 was a nation of three regions namely Eastern, Western and Northern regions. In 1963, the Midwest region was created out of the Western region with its capital at Benin City. In 1967, it was changed to Midwest state and to Bendel State in 1976. Then came 1991, Delta State was created out of Bendel State. Public library services in Delta State started with the Native Authority reading rooms which was established by the British government who then was their country's colonial master. (Okiy, 2000). But in 1969, the military government of the then Midwest state decided to establish a public library in the State. In August 1969, a couple John and Priscilla Harris were commissioned to carry out a survey study on the library needs of the state. This they did and submitted their reports. The government accepted this report and this led to the establishment of the state library board under the Midwest library board Edit-number 4 of 1971 and Mrs. Priscilla Harris was appointed the first director of the library board in October 1970. (Okiy 2000, Obaro, &Umusor, 2021)

The library board operated from Benin City which was the state capital and had branches in some major towns in the state including areas today that are under Delta State. Then came 1991, Edo and Delta state were created out of Bendel State and books and equipment in branch libraries which fell into the area occupied by Delta States were inherited by Delta State. These inherited information resources formed the off shoots of what we have today as the Delta State Public Libraries.

A pilot study conducted by the researcher showed that these library buildings apart from very few are still the same ones at the inception of the library with some very little changes. The library are looking dilapidated, the information resources are not current, the libraries are far from being automated, and the public libraries belong to the State government. On this premise stands this study which is set out to investigate the roles of the state government on revitalising the Delta State Nigeria Public Libraries for National development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the roles of the public library in national development
2. Highlight on the strategies to be adopted by the State government in revitalisingDelta State public libraries for national development

Research Questions

These research questions guided the study.

1. What are the roles of the public library in national development
2. What are the strategies to be adopted by the State government in revitalising Delta State public libraries for national development

Brief Literature Review

The UNESCO public library manifesto issued in 1949 and revised in 1972 and 1994 as viewed by Edoaka, (2000) declares the public library thus "As the local centre of information making all kinds of knowledge and information reading available to the users". Obaro, & Igere(2023) noted that public libraries create and strengthen reading habits in children from the early age and also help in supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels. Edoaka (2000) also noted that public libraries provide opportunities for personal creative development of the citizens and ensuring their access to all sorts of community information. Public libraries stimulates the imaginations and creativity of children and young people. It helps in promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievement, innovations and also fostering inter cultural dialogue, cultural diversity and oral tradition to the immediate community where they are located (Obaro, 2023, Aina and Mamman 2019). Similarly, they encourage habitual reading among the populace, create information consciousness in their citizens and this (Clarke, 2000) opined that they have range of readership and are therefore charged with the responsibility of providing different information resources to their users.

Writing on the role of the government in revitalizing the public libraries, Obaro & Okonkwa, (2021) wrote that public libraries in Nigeria are owned by the government of each State, and as such are sponsored by them. This is why their services are provided to every citizen on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. (Edoka, 2000). This invariably means that everything about the public libraries, budgeting, staffing, information resources accommodation, and equipment are provided by the state government. Buttressing on this, Obaro & Umusor, (2021) noted that to get information close to the grassroots public libraries have branches in all the local government areas of the state with its headquarters at the state capital. However, the level of services rendered by the public library to its populace depends to a large extent on the resources made available by the state government. Esiero, & Obaro (2020) wrote that most public library building in Delta State are inadequate and most information resources are not current. Osuya and Okochi (2014) suggested to the state government that training and retraining of staff will go along way to revitalize the public library. Similarly, Obaro, & Ekeno, (2023) advised that public libraries in Delta State should be fully automated and old and obsolete resources should be weeded. At the same time, the owner of the public libraries, the state government should appreciably fund the public libraries. (Aina & Mamman, 2019)

Methodology

The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study using the questionnaire to solicit for information on what the state government can do to improve the public library services for its citizen and thus help in national development. Delta State has a total number of twenty-seven (27) public libraries. Seven of the of these libraries making it thirty-eight (38) percent were randomly chosen for the study and was judged adequate because this number is manageable and they share the same characteristics. The seven public libraries in Delta State chosen for the study were, Delta

State public library Asaba, Agbor, Warri, Sapele, Ozoro, Umutu, Oleh and Ughelli. The population of the study comprised sixty (60) senior staff of these libraries that were chosen because as senior staff, they have first degrees and above and as such is legible to fill the questionnaire. There was no sampling as all the senior staff was chosen for the study as illustrated.

Name of Library	Respondent
Delta State Library Asaba	15
Delta State Library Agbor	10
Delta State Library Warri	5
Delta State Library Sapele	9
Delta State Library Ozoro	8
Delta State Library Umutu	5
Delta State Library Oleh	8
Total	60

A self-constructed questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on revitalizing public libraries (QRPL)” was used to solicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section “A” sought information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while section “B” contained (17) questions of close ended type based on the four point likert modified for data collection. The validity of the instrument was ensured by three jury of experts from Delta State University, Abraka. They scrutinized items of the questionnaire for construct and content validity. Their comments and corrections ensured the face validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by pretesting the correct version of the questionnaire to twenty (20) librarians in the Edo State Public library, Benin City, who were not part of the study but share similar characteristics. Using the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient to determine the internal constituency of the instrument an $r=0.80$ was the reliability obtained. The value obtained was regarded high enough for the instrument to be replicated in this study. The questionnaire were personally administered by the researcher and her research assistants. The exercise took a period of three weeks. The questionnaire were all coded, analyzed and used for this study. All the questionnaire were returned because the respondents were the senior staff who were adjudged literate enough to fill the questionnaire.

Results

Research Question One

The Roles of Public Libraries in National Development

S/N	Items Statements	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Remark
1	Help the citizens in their formal education	40	10	5	5	3.42	Accepted
2	Create and strengthens reading habits for the citizens	30	20	5	5	3.25	Accepted
3	Give opportunities for personal and creative development	40	10	10	-	3.50	Accepted
4	Ensuring access to community information	30	10	10	10	3.00	Accepted
5	Promotes awareness of cultural heritage	35	15	5	5	3.33	Accepted
6	Help the nations development economically and its innovation, prosperity and educational advancement	38	12	5	5	3.38	Accepted
7	Help the citizens with their literacy development, informal and formal learning	50	10	-	-	3.83	Accepted
8	Through their programmes the create information consciousness in their citizens	40	10	10	-	3.50	Accepted
9	They make contributions to their diverse and inclusive community	30	10	10	10	3.00	Accepted
10	Help nurture electronic and traditional environment by encouraging habitual reading	35	10	10	5	3.25	Accepted

Research Question Two

Strategies to be adopted by the State Government to help in revitalizing public libraries for National Development

S/N	Items Statement	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Remark
1	Help revitalize inappropriate and inadequate library buildings	40	10	10	-	3.50	Accepted
2	Acquisition of current information resources	60	-	-	-	4.00	Accepted
3	Regularly train and retraining of staff	40	10	10	-	3.50	Accepted
4	Automation of the library	50	10	-	-	3.83	Accepted
5	Making available funds	50	5	5	-	3.75	Accepted
6	Weeding of old and not current materials	30	20	5	5	3.25	Accepted
7	Putting security personnel in place	40	10	10	-	3.50	Accepted

Discussion of Findings

It is evident from the study that public libraries play significant roles in nation building. This view has been corroborated by Obaro (2023) when she wrote that public libraries create and strengthen reading habits in education right from the early ages of the citizens. Edoke (2000) supported this assertion with his views that public library help provide opportunities for personal and creative development. Aina and Mamman (2019) wrote that through the public libraries programmes, information consciousness are created, environment for habitual reading are nurtured, citizens are helped with both informal and formal learning at all ages and the awareness of cultural heritage are created among the citizenry.

On the roles of the state government in revitalising the public libraries, Osuya&Okochi (2014), Obaro(2023) asserted that compulsorily library staff must be trained and retrained regularly. The training can be inform of workshops, conferences, and their likes. In this era of information technology, where training is also done online, the library can utilize this opportunity, buy data for her staff and let them be involved with the training. Aina and Mamman (2019) also opined that current information resources should be acquired in the library for users and the library should be automated fully.Funding has been asserted as the life wire of all organizations so the state government should appreciably fund these libraries. Okonkwo&Obaro (2020) has the views that since current information resources are expected to be acquired then obsolete and not current information resources should be weeded away to create spaces for the ones to be acquired.

Conclusion

National development of a country depend largely on the effectiveness of her information system. And these information system is an appendage to the public library which is a place where information is made accessible to all irrespective of who you are. The state government, politicians and stakeholders can come together and jointly revitalize the public library system.

Recommendations

In Nigeria, public libraries are solely owned by the government of each state and so the State Government should try their best to revitalize the libraries. On this premise, the following recommendations are made.

- a. The board of directors of the public libraries should partner with other public libraries so as to adopt their benefiting policies.
- b. The staff and directors should also introduce programmes that can attract their citizens to come use their libraries.
- c. The government should appreciably fund the libraries.
- d. Current information resources should be acquired and the obsolete ones weeded away.
- e. The National library as the Apex library should monitor the progressing chats of the public libraries.

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