

Greener Journal of Social Sciences

ISSN: 2276-7800

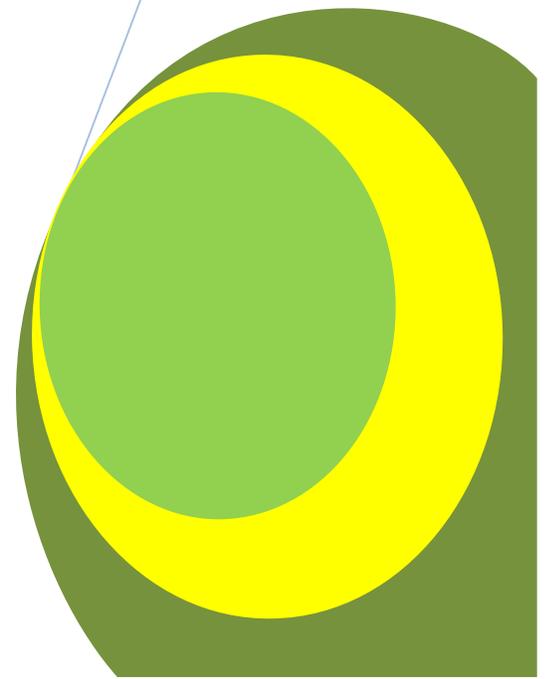
ICV: 5.99

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.2.281114401>

Roles of Academic Library in the National and Economic Development of Nigeria

By

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Research Article (DOI: <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.2.281114401>)

Roles of Academic Library in the National and Economic Development of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

A nation is said to be developed economically when its citizen reaches the high possible standard of living. The key role of education towards the attainment of sustainable development has made qualitative education a key component of the Seven-Point Agenda of sustainable integration. This in turn requires a well equipped Academic Library on our tertiary institutions to improve our educational system. Academic Library is an institution that is well established to take care of the information needs of students, lecturers, researchers and other comity of scholars. The library is continuously bringing man in contact with the world in the fulfilment of its functions as a repository for knowledge in all forms and shapes. The realization of the enormous power of information has made Academic Library and information resource centres inevitably present in many sectors of Nigeria's economy. The level and quality of Academic library participation in a populace such; as education, agricultural activities, health and commercial activities are paramount contributory factors to the level of economic and all development of Nigeria. It is therefore important that Academic Library should be given a stake holder roles for the Nigeria's economic development.

Key words: Academic Library, Economic, Development, Role and Information.

INTRODUCTION

No single definition incorporates all of the strands of economic development. Typically economic development are most commonly defined as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Randal (2004) cited from Michael (1990) described economic development as a process that influences growth and the restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well being of a community. The national economic development involves economic growth, modernization, equitable distribution of income and national resources and social economics transformation for improved living standard of people through the use of country's human, natural and institutional resources (Brooks, 1990). A nation that is unable to provide itself good things of life because of its limited knowledge of science and technology, culture, norms and social organizations, is said to be under-developed, whereas nations that are in the fore front of acquiring, improving and applying human knowledge, science, technology and humanities in making available the highest possible standard of living to its citizens are said to be economically developed (Todaro,2005).

Knowledge has become a critical determinant of competitiveness in the world economy of today given the prevalent globalization and rapid technological change. Nigerian government recognizes the key role of education towards the attainment of sustainable development and has made qualitative education a key component of the Seven-Point Agenda of government. Thus the realization of the National Vision of being one of the top twenty economics of the world by the year 2020, otherwise referred to as vision:2020, is tied to education. Attainment of qualitative education requires improving on teaching, learning and educational administration (Vision, 2010). This in turn requires a well equipped Academic library into the educational system, for it is common knowledge, globally, that library plays a vital role in promoting such an improvement.

A library is a "collection of books and other forms of records and resources housed, organised, and interpreted to meet the broad varying needs of students, staff and others for information, recreation and inspiration", (Adegoke, 1995). Academic library for a developed countries, serve as a tool for intellectuals development which in turn to economics, political development and social happiness and survival. Intellectuals in its various dimensions mean the absence of ignorance of situations. Lozano (2002) agreed that the general library's role is to provide information about its community. The acquisition of knowledge dispel ignorance, therefore the general objective of library is to serve as a centre for information where people acquired the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance about their environment. Academic library is a library that is established to take care of the information need of students, lecturers, researchers and other community of scholar. The Academy library continues to bring man in contact with the word in the fulfilment of its function as a repository of knowledge in all

forms and shapes. It has also become over the years a dynamic centre for research for economic development among nations, including Nigeria.

In a well established higher institutional learning, the Academic library should be an integral part and should be regarded as the "Life-Wire" of such institutional learning. The role of Academic library in developing country calls for examination, and the objectives of this paper are:

1. To examines the role of academic library in the context of national economics development of Nigeria.
2. To examines problems militating against the performances of Academic library for Nigeria economics development.

The question to be addressed here in this article is to which extent should Academic library perform the role of economics development of Nigeria? Also to reorienting the Academic library as an information centre designed to contribute to local economic development by anticipating needs for specific information. In this way, the Academic library satisfies the needs of citizens, small businesses, entrepreneurs and the community's organisations and institutions, therefore achieving greater integration into the local community. Vanda (2009) stated that the role of the information provider to the public has been the provision of solution to the problems, which Academy libraries aims at providing.

Overviewed of Academic Library in Nigeria

The history of Academic library development in Nigeria dates back to pre-independence time when the University of Ibadan and its library were established in 1948. As mentioned by Aguolu (1996), since independence in 1960, there has been an unrelenting upsurge in the establishment of educational institutions at all levels, especially university education since then successive Nigerian governments have continued to invest strongly in higher education. It must be noted that Academic libraries, being integral academic parts of the universities and others higher institute of learning in Nigeria, emerged simultaneously with their parent institutions, which makes the total number of higher institutions in the country to equal the number of Academic libraries available in Nigeria.

According to Yacom (2011), Academic libraries are institutions that are established to take care of the information need of students, lecturers, researchers and other community of scholar. In the words of Wolpert (1999), "academic libraries are cost effective information service and provider of knowledge products to a resident community of scholars." The approach to cost effective is one of the major problem militating the performances of Academic library in Nigeria. (Akintunde 2004) was of the viewed that libraries in many tertiary institutions have either accreditation or failed them because libraries are regarded as tools for Academic excellence. The academic institutions play a major role in the manpower development of any nation providing the high, as well as middle level manpower for the acceleration of social, economic and political advancement of a nation. According to Okiy (2007), quoting Edoke (2000) that the general functions of Academic libraries are as follows:

- to provide; information materials required for the academic programmes of the parent institution,
- research information resources in consonance with the needs of faculty and research students,
- information resources for recreation and personal self development of users,
- study accommodation in a useful variety of locations,
- protection and security for these materials,
- specialized information service to appropriate segments of the wider community, and
- to co-operate with other libraries at appropriate levels for improved information services.

The economic development of a nation can be determined by the quality of human resource produced through the quality of education that a nation offered to her citizens. Therefore knowledge revolution is now the new economic order with the recognition that knowledge and intellect are the critical important ingredient in the economic equation either at the state, local or national level. The performance of human knowledge in a nation building is collaborated with the general functions of academic library in any Nation.

Academic Library as Indispensable of National Development

Valantin (1996) notes that the ability of governments to develop effective policies and plans depends on their capacity to interpret information relevant to the country's economic, social, cultural, and financial situation. According to him, a strong national information centres such as Academic libraries and Information infrastructure allows access to information at all sectors and provides the basis for competent planning and decision-making. Such Academic libraries however, requires sound policies to provide the necessary framework for the development of information and communication systems and services to meet developmental needs. Human knowledge is invariably enriched by information; hence, the collective intellectual abilities of a nation that is; human capital, which will also depend on access to information through well equipped Academy library.

Academic Library as a Developmental Tool in Nigeria

The Academic library serve as a tool for developed nation so also for a developing country, namely a tool for intellectuals' freedom and economic development; a gate-way to political, economic and social happiness and survival. Freedom in its various dimensions means the absence of ignorance of situations. The acquisition of knowledge needed to dispel ignorance derives from studying. The Academic library brings invisible college in contact with the entrepreneur in the fulfilment of its function as a repository for information and human resources. It has also become over the years a dynamic centre for research for development of the various categories of libraries such as Academic, Public, Special, School, College and National. The role of the Academic Library in the developing countries in particular calls for examination, and this is one of the major objectives this paper is examining.

Academic library is central to the provision of information resources that empowers the educational institutions to produce highly resourceful people to impact positively on national development. It is a nation which is conscious of the importance of libraries and information that is drive towards the accelerated development of a nation that can survive and thrive in the comity of nations of this age. Libraries are at the centre of the academic excellence of all educational institutions providing all the relevant information resources necessary for teaching, learning and research functions. The academic health intellectual vitality and effectiveness of the educational institutions in producing high quality graduates into the labours market depending largely on the quality of information resources available in their libraries to support research activities.

Academic libraries have always served as tools for educational advancement at all levels of education (Akintunde, 2004). The realization of the enormous power of information has made Academic libraries and Information resource centres inevitably present in all sectors of a nation's economy. Doctor (1992) has observed that improvements in social access to information will ultimately facilitate the transformation of a society from information economy to an information democracy. Doctor defines information democracy as a socio-political system in which all people are guaranteed the right to benefit from access to information resources. Information democracy deals with empowerment, with ensuring that people have the tools they need to participate in the decision-making structures that affect their lives. The opportunity for people to participate in economic, political, and cultural life depends more on their ability to access and use Academic library as sources of information services. This is because the library contain information which is a vital tool for the pursuit of economic excellence at all levels of developments.

The Performances and Roles of Academic Library in Economic Development of Nigeria

The questions which come to mind when one thinks of a library of this nature in a developing country are; to what extent should it perform the normal function of Academic library? Through the process of obtain information from the Academic library, people are expected to obtain knowledge and skills and hence specialize in specific fields of study. It is this knowledge that allows people to contribute meaningfully to national development. Academic library transmit information and ideas that are necessary for a community's current well-being and future progress. The amount and exact nature of the services provided by these libraries to contribute towards the national's economic development vary depending on the library itself and the services rendered. These can be as following:

- i. City Business Directory e.g. (The Major 5,000 Companies in Nigeria): Academic library began its services with economic development by housing with the compilation of the city's business directory.
- ii. Information Alert service for Businesses: applying information relevant to businesses, for example, highlights problems that have already been solved in other businesses and that would be of general interest to the nation.
- iii. Information about the Nation e.g. (Osun State Annual and Investment Digest): A guide containing relevant information on the city, such as restaurants, banks, hospitals, chemists' and laundries, etc. This type of information has many users: new residents, visitors and entrepreneurs themselves who use the information to analyse markets and new business opportunities.
- iv. Job and Career Information e.g. (Information Communication Technology Firms such as MTN and Glo): Information which helps the unemployed or people looking for new job opportunities. Academic library served as repository for annual business reports, books on job interviews or on how to write a curriculum vitae, etc.
- v. Book and Journal lists: The library could select books and journals to assist business people and researchers to be successful in their businesses and area of their research works.
- vi. Advice service for businesses: The library could promote talks, meetings between business people and business specialists, as well as having professional specialised librarians to attend to the users.
- vii. And other services that the library may identify as being necessary for its users such as information on health.

Through the help of Academic library, the extension agent can help in dissemination of gathered information to the farmers, mostly lived in rural areas. Beside this is to inform them about the upcoming natural disasters, which give them time to take necessary steps for possible protection of their products. The information disseminated by the conveyor (extension agent) can be divided into several major areas. These are: Weather Information, Commodity Price Information, Production and Cultivation Techniques, Plant Nutrients and Water Usage, Educations and Health Information, Government and Non-government Facilities, Demands and Current Stock Information, and Diseases and Insect Management Information.

Among the above services the first four are directly connected with the production system. National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) is one of the Research Institutes under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development, also charged with the primary responsibility of collating, processing and disseminating research results to rural farmers families and other interested end users. COL, (2001) posited that NAERLS/ABU has the following general functions:

- Conduct research in the area Extension including adoption process.
- Coordinate the overall planning and development of extension liaison services throughout the country.
- Coordinate and understand the production of extension packages in the form of training, publications, radio and television packages.
- Coordinate national training, conferences and workshops.
- Publish the National Agricultural Journal of Extension and other books or technical bulletins which cover subject matter in more depth.

Nonetheless, the general functions mentioned above were supported by the Academy library that was established hand in hand with the institution.

Academy Library as a Tool for Educational Development

Academic libraries are viewed as an important component of the massive educational effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria, without the library no meaningful academic efforts can be carried out. Library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. If education is to have a greater share in the moulding 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. Organizing a library to aid education calls for an atmosphere of friendliness and a useful collection. Part of goals of higher learning in Nigeria are: contribution to national development through high level relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; and develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments. Academic library will play a key role in the development of a society that is characterised by developed economics which Nigeria is aspiring to be.

Academy Library as a Tool for Agricultural Sector

Agricultural sector is one of the largest contributor to the economic well-being of most Nigerians. Valerie et al (2010) viewed agriculture sector to continue to grow, research-based knowledge of the existing agricultural practices, the potential of the sector, the approach for transforming the sector, and the impact of the transformation on the economy, sector, and population is needed. Therefore it is important for Academic library to support agricultural policy research in Nigeria that will need to tap into globally available information resources. Announcements about resources, training, and other pertinent information could be directly conveyed to agricultural students and faculty by using existing free database, Access to Global Online Research in Agricultural (AGORA) and The Essential Electronics Agricultural Library (TEEAL) and web-base software programs like wikis and blogs or posters from the library. Valerie et al (2010) stated three major policies by Nigeria Strategy Support Program (NSSP) of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) that the implementation of Nigeria's national development plans by strengthening agricultural-sector policies and strategies through:

1. Enhanced knowledge, information, data, and tools for the analysis, design, and implementation of pro-poor, gender-sensitive, and environmentally sustainable agricultural and rural development polices and strategies in Nigeria;
2. Strengthened capacity for government agencies, research institutions, and other stakeholders to carry out and use applied research that directly informs agricultural and rural polices and strategies; and
3. Improved communication linkages and consultations between policymakers, policy analysts, and policy beneficiaries on agricultural and rural development policy issues.

In addition, other stakeholders in the agriculture industry, such as policymakers, educators, students, development partners, members of the private sector, and extension personnel, with the supports from Academic library services need high quality, relevant, and timely agricultural information to make good strategic policies.

The Effective Role of Academic Library in Health Service Delivery

The central role of information in controlling behavioural diseases such as HIV/AIDS and drugs addict among Nigerians are often resulted the government to deploying all available information sources, without any discrimination of the sources according to their use characteristics in the target communities. Therefore, it was noted that library plays an important role in the dissemination of health information and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. According to a popular saying that "Health is wealth" this also collaborated with Adio, Akewukereke and Samuel (2007) when the authors noted that citizens need access to information on clinical effectiveness in order to improve the quality of care and to stay well-informed on developments in specialist areas. Many diseases that cause serious health problems to the people are well documented in most Academic libraries in Nigeria. The adverse effect of these diseases on Nigerians caused low productivity among the labour force.

The Role of Academic Library in Tourism Sector

The role of libraries in promoting the marketing of the tourism sector cannot underestimate. Libraries as reservoirs of information and the most reliable information reference centre where tourists can seek information on hotels, motels, national parks, and other interesting places. Increment in the commercial values were noted in a city or town that housed higher institution of leaning in Nigeria. This in turn increases population and commercial activities such as buying and selling of both visible and invisible goods.

The impact of Academic library here is the deposition of guilds and directories to locate commercial areas for the new visitors. The combination of each an economic development is the building block for national economic development

Problems Militating Against the Performances of Academic Library in Nigeria Economics Development

The primary role of the Academic library is to acquire, process, preserve, and disseminate recorded information. It is therefore the responsibility of the library to enlighten the users and other members of the community it serves by presenting them with factual information that will guide their actions and help make good steps that will promote economic development. Unfortunately, at present, the greatest problem to information provision by libraries to promote human resource and socio-economic issues are high illiteracy rate and lacked of reading culture. Other barriers include inadequate trained personnel in librarianship that is provision of grants for training of personnel to attend seminars, workshops and conferences, lack of resources, financial constraints, inadequate library services, poor distribution network of libraries, lack of viable data bases for research works and publishing industry that can publish and provide survey and reports. There is no area of library operations to which the computer has not been applied with tremendous gains. At this juncture, one can ask how much of these technological devices are in use in Nigerian libraries? In the past decades, whatever has been done in terms of modern technological applications or automation has not gone deeply enough to make an appreciable impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest resources for development is the human resource hence no nation can develop in isolation of her human resources without a standard library especially Academic library. The level and quality of occupational participation and productivity of a populace are important contributory factors to the level of economic and over all development of any nation. It is therefore pertinent that Academic libraries should:

- i. be equipped by employing high calibre people who are graduate so they can give quality contributions to national development in spheres of life,
- ii. there is need for Nigerian government to take information as tools that aid the enhancement of economic development and this can be achieved by making use of research works that emanating mostly from universities and research institutes that were kept in the Academic library,
- iii. the Local, State and Federal government should collaborate in funding Academic library and make it more responsive to researchers' needs in the country,
- iv. there should be a well collaboration with Librarians, Information Scientists, Researchers and Extension Agents to educate farmers on the use of library as a sources of information at the village level so that the horizon of farmers' knowledge could be broadened, and therefore break the reluctance of farmers to accept agricultural innovations. This will also accelerate the agricultural transformation agenda of the present government in Nigeria, and

- v. academic Librarians should seek partnerships with community health centres, non private organizations, academic institutions, other libraries, for adequate funding and information resource provision.

CONCLUSION

The world is now geared towards industrialisation. However, industries can hardly develop without relevant information on prospects and challenges. Therefore a need for professionally managed Academic Library should put in place if total quality is to be achieved, because apart from making the information that enables decision making timely available, library also contribute significantly to economic development of Nigeria. Academic libraries as reservoir of information are the most reliable information reference centres where users can seek information for professional skills and nation building.

Unfortunately, at present age, the greatest problems militating against information provision by Academic Library to promote economic growth of Nigeria are lack of reading culture, inadequate funding and high level of illiteracy. Above all Academic Library can provide information on improving productivity, hygiene, information on business activities and promote democracy and social-economic issues only, if the three tiers of Nigeria government knowing fully that no nation can prosper without reliable information and no information can be properly managed and disseminated without functional Academic Library, and qualified Librarians and Information scientists.

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Cite this Article: Sobalaje AJ and Ogunmodede TA, (2015). Roles of Academic Library in the National and Economic Development of Nigeria. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2):036-041, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.2.281114401>.