

REPOSITIONING LIBRARIES FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of libraries in sustainable educational development in Niger State. The objectives of the study were: determination of the sustainability of tertiary educational development in Niger State; the role of academic libraries in sustainable development in Niger State, and factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development by institutional libraries in Niger State. Three research questions were postulated to guide the study while a descriptive survey research method was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 78 educational institutions. As such, 78 copies of questionnaire were administered out of which 70 (90%) were returned and found usable. Descriptive statistics method was used in analyzing the data collected which are shown in tables with frequencies and percentages. The findings of the research showed that production of adequate manpower and availability of skilled experts were among the reasons for sustaining education development while availability of well trained teachers and provision of adequate financial resources were among the factors necessary for sustaining educational development in Niger State. The findings of the study also revealed that inclusive selection of relevant, current and adequate information resources both in print and non-print were some of the roles academic libraries could play in sustaining educational development in Niger State. Further more, the finding revealed that lack of specific skilled manpower and insufficient deployments of Information Communication Technologies were some of the factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development in Niger State. The study concluded that despite the facts that Niger State has made great impact in the development of the education sector, there is room for more improvement. It is thus recommended, among other things, that proprietors of tertiary institutions should provide sufficient funding to the libraries in the State.
Keywords: Libraries, Roles of libraries, Education, Sustainable educational development, Niger State

Introduction

Niger State was carved out of the defunct North Western State on 3rd February, 1976 by the then military administration of General Murtala Ramat Muhammad (Niger State Diary, 2008). Before the creation of the State, there were only a few secondary and tertiary institutions. There was no any university or polytechnic except one Advanced Teachers College which was established when the State was created. Primary schools were available in

cities and big villages. However, with the creation of the State, there are two universities, two colleges of education and two polytechnics owned by the Federal and State Governments respectively. Currently, there are twelve (12) tertiary institutions in Niger State. Further more, the number of secondary schools has risen such that there is at least one school in each of the wards in the State, while every village has its own primary school. Also, there are many private primary and secondary schools in the State. Currently, the schools and institutions both private and public in the State are as follows: Early Childhood Care and Education Centre – 715; Primary Schools – 2,628; Junior Secondary Schools – 228; Literacy Centres – 964; Technical Schools – 6; Vocational Schools – 5; Teacher Training Schools – 7; Senior Secondary Schools – 201; Tertiary Institutions – 14; Private Schools (Approved) – 286; and Private Schools (Un-Approved) – 508 (Niger State Government).

In each of the schools and institutions mentioned above, there is need to provide a functional library in order to achieve the desired educational development in the State. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013), the three levels of Government shall establish libraries in various schools and institutions owned by the government. Since libraries constitute one of the most important educational services, the FGN provides that proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. Proprietors are also required to provide for training of librarians and library assistants for the types of services required for the progress of these schools. This underscores the pivotal role of the library; hence it is referred to as the heart of the education enterprise.

Historically, the library and library services came into being when the need arose to provide safety for recorded human knowledge. Thus, the library is traditionally a storehouse of knowledge and repository of information. It provides our civilizations and societies with public access to required information and resources that represent the collective state of knowledge and understanding. In this regard, Fabunmi (2009) viewed the library as an organized collection of items which may be in the forms of books, journals, videos, CD-ROM et cetera along with the services required to make them available to a given user group or groups. Eberhart in Abimbola (2019) also defined the library as a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organized by information professionals or experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programme with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole. From the above definitions, one could posit that library pave ways for people to access knowledge and information which, resultantly, bring about societal development.

Educationally, the library serves the purpose of providing supplementary information resources and services that enhance the attainment of the core and other objectives of educational institutions. This is in the areas of teaching, learning, research and community development. Aina in Haruna, Oni and Akpoduado (2018), corroborated with the above view when they averred that academic library is aimed at supporting the objectives of an academic environment in the areas of learning, teaching, research and community services.

Education brings about change in the individual which promotes greater productivity and work efficiency. This equally makes it a necessary tool for transformation of the society and for this goal to be achieved, the state of the library needs to be investigated since it is the heart of education which help to propel national development. The library is therefore, expected to support in sustaining educational institutions in Niger State through the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information materials to institutions of learning. The libraries also play a great role in the accreditation of academic programmes in higher institutions of learning because any institution that fails to score required percent in the quality of library services would be denied accreditation. In this

direction Okoro, Omeluzor and Bamidele in Saturday and Emuejevoke (2018) observed that, in Nigeria, no university can be established without a functional and well stocked library. The authors added that, no academic programme can be accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and other regulatory bodies of tertiary institutions in Nigeria unless there are adequate library materials in print and non-print available in the library.

From the above analysis, there seems to be a great achievement in terms of educational development in Niger State. However, the fundamental question is the extent to which these achievements or development could be sustained. Sustainability in the contest of this research may be referred to as ability to preserve, maintain or keep educational development progressively. That is, something moving in order to meet the needs of present and future generations. To sustain educational development in Niger State, the libraries, especially academic libraries need to play a role of promoting awareness and access to information. Also, the needed research materials should be acquired, organized and made accessible by the researchers so as to give room for new ideas, knowledge and competitive development among the states in the federation. This study is therefore concerned with the role of libraries for sustainable educational development in Niger State. The libraries established at primary and post primary schools contribute their quota to educational development in the State. However, this study is concerned with the tertiary institutions where the impact of library determines the attainment of their goals and objectives.

Statement of the Problem

Niger State has witnessed tremendous development in the infrastructural development of schools and tertiary institutions in particular. This evident from the establishment of many tertiary institutions in the State. Provision of functional libraries in order to give necessary supplementary information resources geared towards the attainment of the goals and objectives (vision and mission) becomes imperative. Even though it is the Federal Government policy (2013) that proprietors of schools and institutions should establish functional libraries and also train library staff, it is unfortunate that this policy has not been fully implemented. Given this situation, most libraries may not be able to effectively play the role of enhancing educational development in Niger State. The question is, what could be responsible for this situation. The need for an answer to this question provides information gap that requires in depth investigation. Moreover, there is currently no known empirical study conducted on this particular problem area. Hence the justification for this study on the role of libraries for sustainable educational development in Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to determine the role of libraries in sustainable educational development in Niger State. The specific of objectives are to:

10. Determine the sustainability of tertiary educational development in Niger State.
11. Determine the role of academic libraries in sustainable educational development in Niger State
12. Determine the factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development by institutional libraries in Niger State.

Research Questions

1. How could tertiary educational development be sustained in Niger State?
2. What are the roles of academic libraries in sustainable educational development in Niger State?
3. What are the factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development by institutional libraries in Niger State?

Scope of the Study

The general scope of the study is the determination of the role of libraries in the sustainable educational development in Niger State. Institutions covered by the study include all the tertiary institutions in Niger State. These are; Federal University of Technology (FUT), Minna; Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Lapai; Federal Polytechnic (FP), Bida; Niger State Polytechnic (NSP), Zungeru; Federal College Of Education (FCE), Kontagora; College of Education (COE), Minna; Fati Lami Abubakar Institute for Legal and Administrative Studies (FLAILAS), Minna; School Of Nursing (SON), Bida; School Of Midwifery (SOM), Minna; School Of Health Technology (SOHT), Minna; College Of Agriculture (COA), Mokwa; Minna Institute of Technology and Innovation (MITI). Federal College of wildlife Management (FCWM), New Bussa; and Federal College of Fishery and Research Technology (FCFRT), New Bussa. The population of the study constitutes the academic librarians in the various tertiary institutions numbering 78. The librarians were specifically used because in tertiary institutions in Niger State, librarians double as teachers (Lecturers).

Review of Related Literature

Simisaye, Salim and Awodoyin (2018) studied the developing of innovation services in libraries and information centres in Nigeria. The paper examined the realities that facing libraries and information centres in Nigeria in terms of dwindling budget, information revolution, competition and changing needs of users which necessitates the online innovative services. The paper identified web design service, blogging service, electronic publishing services, online information search services; short message alert services, online training/workshop services, digital marketing service and database production/distribution services in support of educational development in Nigeria. The authors further identified challenges inhibiting innovative library services to include fear of competition and failure, inadequacy of specific skills, inadequate funding and inadequate development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among others. The paper concluded that even though libraries have traditionally been custodians of information which are provided free of charge to users, the recent decline in funds to libraries and the change in the concept of information age have necessitated the re – evaluation of services in libraries. This justified the need for a study of the libraries and sustainable development of education in Niger State. The provision of library services, collaboration among librarians, constant evaluation of stocked services, adequate funding, marketing, adequate training and retraining of professionals and deployment of ICT massively.

Tyonom and Ezeogn (2015) presented a paper titled library and education: Panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. The authors argued that one important resource for achieving the goals and objectives of education is the library. Consequently, the role of the library, the relationship between the library and education and the relevance of the former to the later, and the importance of the library and education subsectors for sustainable development were exhaustively discussed. It was observed that both the library and education are two sides of a coin and that they cannot be isolated from each other and that is why the impact of the library should be greatly felt in schools. The authors also identified challenges facing libraries in providing necessary supplementary services to schools to include poor funding, inadequate qualified staff, inadequate ICT facilities, epileptic power supply, inadequate research materials, outdated collection and general low perception of the relevance of libraries. The paper concluded that while libraries are essential to our economic wellbeing, improvement of learning and meeting the challenges of information overload, education is core sustainable national development. The paper finally, recommended that there is need to reposition and revamp our libraries and the entire educational system.

Ibrahim and Aliyu (2016) explained factors influencing customer satisfaction with reference and information services in academic environment such as the universities and other tertiary institutions. The paper identified types of reference services in libraries and classified them in to direct and indirect reference services. The authors emphasized that any delay in satisfying customer queries will defeat the purpose of reference and information service provision which is aimed at supporting the development of educational set up. The paper further noted the instrumentality of the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the provision of reference and information services which have compelled the librarians to redefine the convenient ways to promptly meet the information needs of the academic communities. In order to achieve this objective and for the library to give the desired support for educational development, the paper advocated appropriate training to be given to professionals on effectiveness and adoption of emerging ICTs that modern world offers in reference and information services so as to maximally satisfy the needs of their customers.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research method was used for this study. Koul (2009) argues that the descriptive research method has undoubtedly been the most popular and most widely used research method in education. This, according to the author is because it helps to explain educational phenomena in terms of the conditions or relationships that exist, opinion that are held by students, teachers, parents and experts, processes that going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing. The author also observes that because of the apparent ease and directness of this opinion about some issue, by a simple questionnaire. Consequently, descriptive survey research method is relevant for this study because it will facilitate gathering of required data with ease and limited time through the administration of self-designed questionnaire. The population of the study was seventy eight (78) and therefore, total enumeration was used because the population was not too large to manage. The descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data collected for the study and shown in the tables and frequencies and percentages.

Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Data

Response Rate

Seventy eight (78) copies of questionnaires were administered while seventy (70); representing ninety percent (90%) were retrieved and found usable **Research Question 1:** How could tertiary educational development be sustained in Niger State?

Table 2: Sustainability of tertiary educational development in Niger State

S/NO	Reasons for Sustainability	Frequency	Percentage
1	Production of adequate manpower	70	100
2	Achievement of State/National development	65	93
3	Acquisition of higher level of literacy	69	99
4	Availability of skilled experts in all fields	70	100
	Factors for Sustainability		
5	Availability of well trained teachers	70	100
6	Provision of adequate classrooms/laboratories and teaching materials	70	100
7	Provision of adequate financial resources	70	100
8	Provision of ICT facilities (computer and related electronic gadgets)	68	97

9	Provision of well stocked libraries	70	100
10	Training and retraining of teachers	65	93
11	Establishment of tertiary institutions in all Local Government Areas (LGA)	40	57
12	Adequate remunerations for teachers	70	100
13	Provision of alternative source of power supply	60	86

Table 2 reveals that the most acceptable reasons for sustainability of educational development in Niger State were basically two (2) as indicated by all the respondents, that is, 100%. For example, production and adequate manpower, and availability of skilled experts in all fields, 70 (100%) of the respondents agreed that these reasons were necessary for sustainable educational development in Niger State. Meanwhile, to acquire higher level of literacy and achieve State and National development, 69 (99%) and 65 (93%) of the respondents respectively agreed to those reasons as necessary inputs for sustainable educational development in Niger State. Only 1 (1%) and 5 (7%) of the respondents disagreed to these reasons adduced as necessary for educational development in Niger State.

Still on the responses from Table 2, it was revealed that all the respondents, 70 (100%) of the respondents agreed that factors required for sustainability of educational development in Niger State include availability of well trained teachers; provision of adequate classrooms/laboratories and teaching materials; provision of adequate financial resources; provision of well stocked libraries and adequate remuneration for teachers. The lowest rated factors pointed out by the respondents were provision of alternative source of power supply and establishment of tertiary institutions in all local government areas (LGA) of the state were rated by 60 (86%) and 40 (57%) of the respondents respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the roles of academic libraries for Sustainable educational development in Niger State?

Table 3: Role of academic libraries in sustaining tertiary educational development in Niger State

S/NO	Role of Academic Libraries	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inclusive selection of relevant, current and adequate information resources in print format	70	100
2	Acquisition of ICT facilities	70	100
3	Processing information resources in such a way that it meet with users' easy accessibility.	65	93
4	Provision of circulation services that generate continuous effective library usage e.g adequate number and period of loans etc.	63	90
5	Reference (including e-reference) services	60	86
6	Provision of e-Current Awareness Service	55	79
7	Provision of library statistics so as to determine the extent of the use of the library and its resources	66	94
8	Employment of qualified and experienced staff	70	100
9	Training and retraining of staff to meet with current development in service delivery	65	93
10	Provision of digital information services	60	86
11	Establishment of institutional repository	54	77
12	Marketing library services	60	86
13	Provide social media based services	58	83

14	Creation of library consortium for tertiary institutions in Niger State	70	100
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Table 3 shows that all the respondents, 70 (100%) agreed that for sustainable educational development to be achieved in Niger State, academic libraries should do inclusive selection of relevant, current and adequate information resources in print formats; acquisition of all relevant ICT facilities; employment of qualified and experienced staff; and creation of library consortium for all tertiary institutions in the state which will go a long way to reduce the cost involved in acquiring information resources individually. These roles are followed by a range of others required to enhance educational development in the state. At the bottom of the roles to be played by academic libraries is the establishment of institutional repository as argued by 54 (77%) of the respondents. This role is expected to make available, to the entire world, free of charge, publications emanating from the institutions, by the institutions and academic staff so as to increase the rating of the institution nationally and internationally.

Research Question 3: What are the factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development by institutional libraries in Niger State?

Table 4: Factors inhibiting the sustainability of educational development

S/NO	Inhibiting Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inadequate financial support	70	100
2	Lack of specific skilled manpower	70	100
3	Insufficient deployment of Information and Communication Technology	70	100
4	Lack of adequate training and retraining of staff	66	94
5	Excessive power outage	70	100
6	Fear of change	50	71
7	Unavailability of required information resources locally	68	97
8	Excessive foreign exchange payment for foreign materials/equipment	70	100
9	Lack of consortium to share available information resources by institutional libraries	70	100

Table 4 reveals that most of the inhibiting factors listed were attested to by all the respondents as factors militating against sustainable educational development in Niger State. However, 66 (94%) of the respondents believed that some of the respondents have training skills needed for sustainable educational development in Niger State. At the rock bottom of the list is the issue of fear of change where 50 (71%) of the respondents voted against this factor.

Research Findings

The study revealed that the reason for the sustainability of educational development in Niger State include the production of adequate manpower that meet with the human resource need of the state and the nation; availability of skilled experts in all field of human endeavours; acquisition of higher level of literacy to encourage competitiveness in various areas of specialization and achievement of state and national development. The finding of study also revealed the factors responsible for sustainable educational development in Niger State to include availability of well trained teachers so as to maintain required standard and quality of

education to be imparted to students; provision of adequate classrooms/laboratories and teaching materials which will facilitate easy conduct of lectures and acquisition of practical experiences; provision of financial resources and provision of well stocked libraries. The finding further revealed the following to be the role of academic libraries in sustainable educational development in Niger State. These include selection of relevant, current and adequate information resources in both print and non-print formats; employment of qualified and experienced staff that will provide effective library services and creation of library consortium for tertiary institutions in Niger State so that they could benefit from the facilities and services of other libraries through sharing of available facilities and services. The findings of this study also revealed some factors that inhibit sustainability of educational development in Niger State to include inadequate financial support to acquire current information resources and expand the available facilities; insufficient Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that is required to provide the current information in all fields throughout the world; lack of specific skilled manpower for operation and maintenance of information resources especially ICT; excessive power outage and excessive foreign exchange payment for foreign materials and equipment.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it could be concluded that production of adequate man power, availability of skilled experts, well trained teachers, provision of adequate classrooms/laboratories, and provision of adequate financial resources among others were reasons/factors responsible for the sustainability of educational development in Niger State. Further more, the role of academic libraries in sustaining educational development in Niger State include inclusive selection of relevant, current and adequate information resources in print format, use of ICT facilities, employment of qualified and experienced staff and creation of library consortium among libraries in educational institutions in Niger State, among others. Lastly, several factors were discovered to inhibit sustainability of educational development in Niger State. Among these include inadequate financial support, lack of specific skilled man power, insufficient deployment of ICT facilities and excessive power outage. Based on these facts, it is apparent that a lot needs to be done by both the Niger State Government and the academic libraries in order to ensure significant sustainable educational development in the State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered with a view to accelerating the role of the library in sustainable educational development in Niger State.

2. All proprietors of tertiary institutions in the State (State and Federal) should provide sufficient funds necessary for the acquisition of resources needed in all the institutions.
3. Libraries should ensure effective use of ICTs in service delivery in order to enable the academic community have access to and share current information available globally.
4. Training and retraining should be intensified so as to equip the library staff well equipped with current developments and global best practices in library service delivery for academic community.

Alternative sources of power should be provided so as to guarantee uninterrupted power supply and enhance effective use of library facilities, resources and services.

5. All teachers should publish in their areas of specialization so as to curtail importation of reading materials.
6. Academic libraries in the State should establish a consortium so as to be able to share available information resources and services at highly reduced costs.

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