

## THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

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### Abstract

Illiteracy has been regarded as an enemy and evil which keeps people in darkness, bound to their traditions and superstitious; it makes people resistant to change and new ideas, and isolated from progress, thus, unaware and incapable of meeting the demands of their changing environment and ever-progressing world. Therefore, this paper established a relationship between library, adult literacy and education. Once libraries are incorporated in adult literacy education it will enhanced adult learning, functional and develop adult attitude toward self dependent in terms of reading and learning.

**Keywords:** Library, Literacy and Education

All over the world libraries are dedicated to providing free and equitable access to information to all, albeit in writing, electronic or audiovisual form. They play a key role in creating literate environments and promoting literacy by offering relevant and attractive reading materials for all ages and all literacy levels. They embrace the responsibility to offer services that bridge social, political and economic barriers and traditionally make special effort to extend their services to marginalized people. Libraries assist in funding, using and interpreting appropriate information that opens up opportunities for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, informed citizenship, recreation, creative imagination, individual research, critical thinking and ultimately, empowerment in an increasingly complex world.

The ability of an individual to contribute to the development of country lies in his ability to read and write. There cannot be meaningful development in modern society where majority of the populace is illiterate. In spite of the importance of education to improve standard of living, Nigeria has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (World Development Report (1998) and Adeleye (2002). This low level of literacy partly accounts for the low level of development in Nigeria. One major means of enhancing adult literacy education in Nigeria is through libraries. Every nation requires information that satisfies their socio-economic objectives. These objectives help the library institutions to provide vital information resources to the learners. However, through education the masses can attain literacy that is a prerequisite for any success if our national libraries provide books and non-books materials to meet the educational needs and support the efforts of the adults education programmes to help contribute to the growth of a nation.

Akparabore (2011) pointed that some causes of adult failure to seek information even when available are as follows:

1. Illiteracy due to lack of appreciation of the value for information.
2. Ignorance of the citizens of the existing information.

3. Failure to approach public library librarians for information.

A strong focus of the last decade has been on using libraries to break the cycle of family illiteracy. The library is a perfect place to offer final literacy programmes as it provides materials and services to all ages, groups and reading levels. By using the library with children, parents are setting a good example and help to establish a motivation for reading pattern for long life learning. In Slovenia, public libraries were among the first providers of intergenerational lifelong learning processes that included children, youth, adults who come together and learned from each other by exchanging knowledge, experiences and viewpoints (Adams, 2002:30).

**The Role of the Libraries in Enhancing Adult Literacy Education**

Libraries continue to play an important role in adult literacy programmes in sustaining the diverse forms of cultural expressions. Libraries acquire, process, organize and preserve materials which depict the way of life and experiences from others. Through libraries, the adult illiterates class can develop the skills in computer usage in searching for collection, indexing and abstracting.

Libraries serve as information system which allows one to explore parameter of his topic, promote functional literacy and education for adults outside the formal school system. They provide appropriate reading materials to assist the government efforts in improving adult literacy thereby improving their educational standard and technical competence, (Nwogu, Obiagwu and Okeke, 1999 and Augu&Aguou, 2002).

Libraries can also train personnel in carrying out the different adult literacy educational programmes in the community; through workshops, seminars and conferences on the different subject areas of the literacy programmes, so that they can become better at their various fields. Libraries can also carry out their roles as education providers for their community by setting up literacy institutions such as literacy programmes in their community. By doing this, libraries would have successfully carried out a literacy campaign since adult literacy programme would aid literacy (Apotide, 2002).

Apart from enhancing literacy, the libraries have focus on its collection development on the needs of its neo-literate users. This means libraries focus more on the acquisition of relevant and interesting reading materials for adults with low vocabulary or literacy skills. The libraries also develop its own community newspaper, ask the course participants to write their own biography or publish a collection of adult writings. These are valuable educational tools which encourage adult to write, give them an audience for their products, enable them to gain confidence in their writing abilities and encourage organizational skills.

1. Helping literacy to become permanent.
2. Assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of the community.
3. The improvement of knowledge and skills for positive productivity.
4. Enabling the individual to develop its full potentials and widening the range of the perception interests and skill.

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In line with these, 1994 UNESCO manifesto sees libraries as a living force for a practical demonstration of universal as a lifelong process, that libraries can complement the educational activities by assisting adult in no longer of school age, developing their attitude, extending the knowledge and by acquiring needed technical or vocational skills. In this way, the adult education products would emerge as responsible members of the society. Library roles are very important in enhancing adult life of any nation because if Nigeria must develop as a country and achieve its positive growth rate per capita income the majority of the populace must be educated. This is because human resources is the most important indicator of a nation is the quality of its human resources and the general capital. The most effective method of developing human resources is through education. (Akparobore, 2011).

### **The Need Library to Adult Literacy Education**

Libraries have been generally conceived as depository or house of knowledge where valuable historical, cultural and religious documents pertaining to human heritage are usually preserved for posterity. Libraries are developed as a result of need to preserve valuable records of events. Originally, these records might be in the form of written scrolls, papyrus kept in jars, written clay, tablets, manuscripts kept in monasteries and printed materials such as books, letters, status and laws. As of that time, only few people such as the kings, nobles, renowned scholars and the ecclesiastical orders had access to these libraries. Adeleke (2002) ascertained that the history of libraries and adult activities anteceded the rise of adult education movement in Great Britain. He recorded that as early as 1464, John Glock, the Bishop of Worcester, established a library at Bristol in the house of the Guild of Kalendannies, and ancient religious fraternity. In Nigeria, Oyesade (2003) opined that the first librarian was funded in 1879.

The importance of the library in adult literacy education cannot be over-estimated because the library as an agent of change has brought to mankind various radical transformations that are either social, economic, cultural or intellectual, from ancient times when all knowledge was one, limited in scope and depth to this modern (digital) era, when all knowledge was one, limited in scope and depth to this modern (digital) era, when the volume of records have increased, the library is still “a growing organization”. Beginning at the Federal level to fund programmes such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE), libraries are viewed as an important component of this massive educational effort of the Federal Government without the library no meaningful academic efforts can be carried out.

The importance attached to library services to adult learners include that the libraries create literacy among the people, give public lectures, library services, improve knowledge and skill for productivity and as a tool for national development. Government policy statements have emphasized the determination of the government to make a success of the adult programmes in the country. The National Policy of Education (2004) for example gives the following as objectives of adult literacy education programme.

- Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education.

These include the nomadic, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.

- Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- Provide in-service on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skill.
- Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.
- Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.

The above stated objectives cannot be achieved without the library. The library with its information specialist plays significant roles in fostering adult literacy education by enhancing and providing useful reading materials to support their research and reading. According to Metzger (1991), libraries are needed to enhance an individual to develop full potentials and skills. Other functions of library to enhance adult literacy programmes include; public enlightenment or rights in the society, understanding social values and expected conduct in public life; assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of the society; also to cultivating and maintaining reading culture and promotion of good literatures.

Adeleke (2003) further asserts that the need of library services as that which aim at relieving the tedium of idle hours and to develop a habit of continuous reading even after the normal class. Therefore, education without the services of the library is a half-baked education, which can only produce narrow minded individuals.

### **Organization of Literary Service for Adult Education Learners**

High illiteracy rates still persist among Nigerians with its social and economic implications. This has become a growing concern in recent time. It becomes important that, the libraries should not only serve the literate minority but should also encourage the illiterate to become literate by providing easy to read materials, well trained facilitators. Attitude in this regard is very crucial for the effective utilization of library service in developing countries including Nigeria. Owolabi (2010) asserts that libraries contain recorded documents, they are no more mere storehouses of the ideas of generation of scholars but they serve as powerful house for further generating fresh ideas.

Therefore, the technical arrangement of books, the organizational set up of the library, staff, the physical arrangement of the library as it affects free movement and easy identification of reading materials by the clientele as well as the cultivation of the proper attitude of the clientele and the right handling of materials by them are all important in contributing towards the quality of services rendered by a library to adult literacy programmes. Considering the pivotal role library plays in adult literacy, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Libraries should to be an essential part of a long-term policy framework for the whole education sector, embracing literacy information provision, and lifelong learning.

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2. Libraries must be supported by legislation and must be adequately financed by national and local governments.
3. Libraries have to be based on community needs, analysis and constantly make their service relevant to adult community needs.
4. Libraries have to cooperate and network with other education stakeholders and local publishing industry.
5. Libraries are the logical access point and support centre for community-based literacy programmes. They have to particularly support family literacy, as a literate home environment is the key factor in enabling and motivating adult to read.

Libraries are important institutions cannot be separated from education. The wealth of a country is not measured by its natural resources, but by its knowledge, skills and motivation of its people. If government and decision makers recognize the value and the need to have population that not only can read but will read and write, they must be willing to commit enough resources in support of libraries. With sufficient investment and support, libraries will have a positive impact on the achievement of adult literacy education for all and thereby enhancing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore adults' learners should be encouraged to use libraries maximally.

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