

## CHAPTER FOUR

## ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AS AN IMPETUS FOR CHANGE IN NIGERIA

**Drisu N. Ibrahim**Library Department, Federal Polytechnic,  
Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria.Email: [ibrandaidris@gmail.com](mailto:ibrandaidris@gmail.com)**Jeremiah E. Salifu**Library Department, Federal Polytechnic,  
Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria.Email: [jerrysalifu69@gmail.com](mailto:jerrysalifu69@gmail.com)**Abstract**

*The paper examines the academic library as an impetus for change in Nigeria. It discusses the role of academic libraries in an academic environment, and how they can foster the change agenda of the Nigerian government. The paper identifies attitudinal and physical characteristics as the two basic elements of change. The paper recommends the dissemination of relevant information to the academic users' community in order to direct their minds to the change agenda of the government of Nigeria. The paper concludes that academic libraries should acquaint themselves with the change agenda of the government in order to gear up their services towards that direction. Academic libraries should also be proactive in the provision of services such as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Services (CAS), book talk and knowledge management in order to rekindle the use of the library for the purpose of achieving the set goals of the change agenda of the government.*

**Introduction**

The word 'change' is to make something different. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary explained 'change' as passing from one state or forms to another, or replace one thing with another, or to exchange positions. Positive change could bring about positive improvement in any phenomenon, be it educational, political and economical. Change is generally the process of causing a function, practice or thing to become different compared to what it is at present, or what it was in the past. So change can bring about a positive turnaround of Nigeria's economy in both human and infrastructural development. It is generally agreed that positive 'change' is necessary if the society must progress. Nigerian government is being confronted with several problems. These problems amongst others include economic, political, social and security problems. On the economic sphere, it is evident that the economy of the country has been worsening over the past few years. This is as a result of over



dependence on crude oil as the sole source of revenue. The hitherto booming oil sector declined as a result of falling oil prices in the international market, and the falling local production of crude oil as a result of havoc wrought by vandals on oil facilities. As Kachikwu (2016) rightly puts it, the effect of declining prices of oil in the international market, and vandals' destruction of oil facilities in the oil producing states is crippling local production. This, together with oversupply of the product, has created shock in the economy. The Nigerian economy from the first quarter of 2009 started receiving the hit through the global financial meltdown. That has transformed into economic crisis that has wildly been described as the worst over time. From that period to date, the country's economy has been rocked by continued sliding and unsteady prices of crude oil - the mainstay of Nigeria's economy-declining external reserves, persistently bearish run in the capital market, fast depreciating local currency and persisting double digit inflation. There is therefore the need to diversify the economy to look at other income sources of revenue, because it is now evident that the oil revenue can no longer take the country to the proverbial promised land-national development. Instead it has taken the country into economics recession.

There is also the issue of corruption eating deep into Nigerian society. Corruption connotes willingness to act dishonestly in exchange for, or with the intent to gain, personal advantage in form of money or otherwise. Corruption in Nigeria, which includes bribes, embezzlements, money laundering and frauds, appears to be everywhere, at every level of government, every arm of government and among all strata in society. The 'change' policy of the government is to overturn the corrupt practices amongst Nigerians. As rightly put by Muhammadu Buhari "if we don't kill corruption, corruption will kill us in Nigeria". The 'change' programme is meant to eradicate political thuggery, election manipulations and other problems associated with elections and politics in Nigeria. The social problems include youth's restiveness and drug additions. The current economic crisis, political and social vices has stamped a lot on our psyche, and there have been the outcry to get out of the situation. Thus, the change agenda was born. The goal of the change agenda of the federal government is to attain self-sufficiency in food, building materials, clothing, energy, create a solid base for self sustained industrialization, and reduce to the bare minimum negative human attitudes and corrupt tendencies. Meaningful change can be achieved by imparting knowledge-education. Ibironke (2016), posit that the idea of developing a nation without educating her people is more of a pipe dream than reality. For any community to be transformed, the education of its populace is essential, because education possesses transformative power. This grain



of truth was further stressed by Nelson Mandela's words in Ibironke (2016) "Education is the most powerful tool which can be used to change the world". Atuaji in Ibironke (2016), hinted on the potency of education, prescribing it as an antidote to the challenges in the entire constituents of the sectors of the fabric of a nation. Sound education can only be achieved if academic libraries are placed in better standing, and librarians carry out their services effectively.

### Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are libraries established by institutions of higher learning to support the academic programmes of the institutions; by providing resource materials to the staff and students for learning, teaching and research. According to Rain (2017), an academic library is a library that is associated with a tertiary institutions (i.e. monotechnics, polytechnics, universities, etc.); and it is intended to serve both the students and staff of the institution. According to him, this type of library is set up to support the curriculum of the school, as well as to support the research needs of both the students and the staff. The main function of any academic library is to support their parent organisation in achieving its organizational objectives by providing research and information materials or resources to the academic organization. Therefore this era of change policy of the government is an appropriate time for the academic libraries to actualized the purpose for which they are established; as it is clear that academic libraries are the impetus in which the change agenda can be properly grounded, or serve as an agent of information to propel the change envisioned in the government agenda.

Academic library is one of the organs that can contribute to the change policy of the government. This is clear from the objectives of academic libraries which has to do with acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating relevant information resources to the citizens of a country. The policy of change can therefore be achieved if academic libraries will play their roles in this much needed change programme through course offerings, research development, and production of programmes. Change agenda cannot effectively be carried out without adequate information which the library and information centres are not just the custodians, but also dispensers, of every form of knowledge. Bello (2010) asserts that libraries from time immemorial have been essential constituent of scholastic enterprise and have been established alongside with academic institutions. The library is the centre point around which academic activities revolves. Aguolu (1989) also stated that we cannot expect excellent academic programmes in any educational institution without the support of a well-equipped library. Libraries are not adjuncts to their



institutions, but an integral part of them. They are the hub from which intellectual activities radiate to all academic and research programmes:

### **Information**

Information is an assemblage of data in a comprehensible form, written or printed on paper, stored in electronic databases, collected on the internet etc., capable of being transmitted (Prytherch, 2005). Information, according to Reitz (2004), is data presented in readily comprehensible form to which meaning has been attributed within the context of its use. He explained further that the most effective means of disseminating information is by converting it to written or printed format; and this is decoded through the art of reading. Popoola (2002) described information as a strategic resource for virtually any person, organization or establishment. Information to him is like money that gives economic, political and other forms of power to those who have it. A nation's development therefore is dependent on the extent to which the people are informed. Generally, information is vital for the development of knowledge which brings about national development. It is the means to actualise the change agenda.

Nkoye and Okon (2010), assert that access to information is an essential element for conducting quality knowledge acquisition and transmission. Information therefore is vital and necessary for the survival of any society, industry, establishment and system; irrespective of the level of development. It is required to set and modify the goals and aspirations of people or society, an establishment or system (Muhammed, 2005). Ikoja-Odongo (2001) also stated that information is one of the major resources that are required for improving knowledge. Information therefore is the most important element of production, because it is the key to effective management of all types of knowledge in any given economy. Understanding information is an important element in knowledge acquisition. Ikoja-Odongo (2001) further stressed that power comes from using information, thereby promoting innovation in production; resulting in high productivity. The provision of information has facilitated trade, business operations as well as economic growth. The viability and profitability of any change policy of government through libraries rests on information available to the patrons. Information can be displayed either in book, journal or electronic formats; the custodians which of course are the libraries. Hence library and information services in academic libraries can foster the realization of change agenda of the Nigerian Government.



## **The Role of Information in the Change Agenda of Nigerian Government**

Information is a raw material for development of urban and rural dwellers. Prosperity, progress and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, and use pertinent information. Harande (2009) asserts that information is the life blood of any society, and vital to the activities of any nation. For any country to be viable in her change agenda it requires her citizenry to be skilled and competent; and this can only be achieved with well packaged information resources through library services. Olorunyomi (1994) stressed that information can help blind people who cannot see 'vision' to make meaningful and reasonable projections into the future, or for planning and designing. National progress and development will be impossible without creative and imaginative utilization of recorded information as each new idea and invention grows out of accumulated and conserved knowledge. Information is paramount for Nigeria's populace in their day to day work towards actualization of the change agenda of the Nigerian government. Information is equally needed for the day to day learning and teaching process of the Nigeria academic communities. Therefore librarians are saddled with the responsibility of acquiring, processing and organizing the information resources to meet the information need of their academic communities.

## **Library and Information Services as Aid to Change in Nigeria**

The basic goal of any library and information service is to facilitate and support access and utilization of information resources to promote and sustain the intention of the targeted audience. The purpose of academic library and information service therefore is to fulfil the information needs of the potential users. Accessing the right information with a view to utilizing such information for the purpose of change agenda is cardinal. Academic library and information service is an impetus to the development of any nation, especially developing countries. In order to provide the relevant information to the relevant audience at the appropriate time and place, through appropriate channel, and to ensure the effective and efficient utilization of the information provided, librarians must have the knowledge of the information requirements of their patrons. This will enable them to determine their actual needs and wants, and identify the appropriate channels and formats through which the information can be properly disseminated for utilization. Omoniwa (1986) affirms that libraries expedite the smooth flow of relevant information with efficiency, and help to channel available resources to set goals; thereby linking researchers and research results to policy makers and industrialists who can turn the results into concrete benefits. Nkyoye and Okon, (2010) stressed that knowledge, beliefs, and opinions are personal, subjective and conceptual. To communicate them, they have



to be expressed, described, or represented in some physical way, as a signal, a text or a statement. Key characteristics of information as knowledge is therefore information that is applied. Thus, information is one of the major resources that can equip Nigerians in contributing and improving the change activities of the government. The academic library can therefore offer the following services to the Nigeria populace in order to aid the change agenda process of the government:

**Current Awareness Services (CAS):** This is the service offered by libraries to aid active dissemination of information (Owoeye, 2003). The process involves anticipation of the user's needs based on full knowledge of his job, and providing information for the user through circulation of review of new books and journals.

**Newspaper Cuttings:** Newspapers are always the first to carry news about new developments in any given area. Hence there is always the need to know what happens in any given area, both within and outside the country. Photocopies of such developments are made and given subject headings which are organized into a given file for the prospective users. These files constitute very handy and useful reference materials to the patrons.

**Abstracting and Indexing Services:** Tiwari (2012) explains this as library services that provide brief summary, and objective presentation of the essential content of a book, article, speech, report, dissertation or other works; stating the salient points. This summary is accompanied by adequate bibliographic information to enable the original publication to be traced. Abstracts and indexes of business information publications can continually be compiled by the library on current development on change agenda of the Nigerian government and transmitted to prospective user's community to acquaint them of such developments.

**Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI):** This is another strategy and service libraries can use to assist change agenda of the government. According to Aguolu (1989) it entails selection of information resources based on the need of the users as available in the library, and bringing them to the users' knowledge. This service can be used by librarians to acquaint the government with the reports of researches carried out, with the aim of attracting funds to researchers to bring the results of their researches to light.

**Electronic Services Delivery (ESD):** These are services provided by the library, where information are converted into digital and electronic formats and sent to users using e-mails. Information about endurable areas of change agenda are captured and delivered electronically to the users. The library can also search on behalf of the patrons, and forward such information to their e-mails.



**Reference Services:** These are the services provided by the library to users in search of information on various subjects in the library (Aguolu, 1989). These services are provided to users who may find it difficult to exploit information resources in the library on their own. These services are also given to users who can exploit information resources, but are constrained by time. Information resources in assorted format are assembled, and users are given access to them (Tiwari, 2012). Individuals can take advantage of this to access recent information through the librarian.

**User Education:** Chopra (2001) quoting UNESCO Director-General, Toctlioun Jacques, defines user education as any effort or programme which will guide and instruct existing and potential users, individually or collectively, with the objective of facilitating the recognition of their own information needs, formulation of these needs, effective and efficient use of information services, and accessing these services. It is therefore the services provided by the library to users on how to exploit and access useful information from the library on their own, without much assistance. Academic libraries can organize lectures, seminars and workshops for users of the library. The problem the libraries encounter in Nigeria is that most Nigerians are not in love with books. That is why there is the saying "if you want to hide anything from black Africans, put it in a book". Therefore, this has made useful information not accessible to them for reading. Librarians require proactive action to induce them with necessary information required.

## Conclusion

The change agenda of the federal government can only be achieved through a good systematic training and instruction, and academic libraries play vital roles in this direction. The academic libraries can help the Nigerian government to achieve its change agenda, by providing adequate and up to date information materials to keep the nation abreast of developments in all branches of knowledge as they unfold. It helps in widening the experiences and research minds of the citizenry who can make a useful contribution towards the government change agenda. Library and information service can provide good information resources for the realization of the change required in Nigeria. Access to good information sources can help in the development of effective knowledge and skills for the Nigerian change agenda.

## Recommendations

Nigeria's change agenda cannot be achieved without exploiting library and information services. Academic Libraries should be able to understand the information needs of their patrons in their various locations. Also information



resources of various kinds should be well packaged and made available to the various patrons according to their needs (knowledge management). This could be done through Current Awareness Services (CAS), Newspaper Cuttings (NC), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and Electronic Services Delivery (ESD). Seminars and workshops should be organized to create values in the change agenda, and sustain it through access to valuable information. The government should adequately equip libraries with the necessary modern information infrastructure primarily to fulfil the information needs of the nation. Such infrastructures are computers systems with internet connectivity, current information resources – books and journals – both in hard and soft copies and uninterrupted power supply. The provision of these infrastructures will assist the library to enhance the actualization of the dream of government change agenda. Academic libraries should be well funded by the management of the institutions. Such funding will enable the library provide current information resources in all formats, including e-books and e-journals, for utilization by the users.

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