

Rural Libraries in Youth Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is a developing country with youths that have great potentials. They embrace new innovations easily. In Anambra State of Nigeria alone, there are eight (8) higher institutions. It was observed that in the rural areas recently, youths indulge in drug taking and other anti-social acts. Many of them are dropout from schools. The rural libraries could play big roles by reverting them to skillful living again that is by equipping the libraries with information resources that would interest the youths and attract them back to complete their education. A questionnaire titled "Using the rural library for youth development" was constructed and distributed among the youths and librarians in five (5) villages that have rural libraries. 300 copies of questionnaire was made and distributed. 235 respondents were gotten. The response rate became 78%. Findings were made. It was suggested that the government should build and equip the rural libraries to modern standard, provide current materials and also employ more librarians to work there.

Keywords

Rural Libraries, Youths, Information Services, Education, Government, Anambra State, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Youths are the future leaders of every country and should be provided with meaningful information. Weiss et al. (2000) defines information as the cornerstone of successful socio-economic development because it plays a key role in decision making. Rural libraries are public information centre, for the people living in rural areas. The rural dwellers have the rights to acquire all kinds of information for their well being from the rural libraries. In India, Gill (2009) reported that many libraries in rural Punjab are spreading awareness about different aspects of life and society and also transforming lives of farmer's families. Also a member of a library committee reported

that the aim of opening a library at Shaheed Bhagat Singh was to make the rural people aware of their rights. By providing them with modern informative literatures, many of the rural youths in Nigeria who may be farmers will go back to school to learn more on agriculture. Youths should spend their time in reading helpful books and other educative materials and not indulge in anti-social activities which are common in rural areas in Nigeria.

Just like in India, Nigerian Government had developed Public Libraries, to help the rural dwellers, but the problem was that: establishment of public libraries was limited to urban areas. Rural libraries were mere village halls, packed with turned materials with no facilities. Unagha (2008) opined that if we want children and all citizens, to acquire literacy, we must provide reading materials. Rural libraries should be provided with information communication facilities (ICT). It is of great benefit to our lives. Internet influences the lives of youths a lot. Kibat (1990) stated that there is growing recognition that library services particularly in public libraries are an integral part of national socio economic development and improvement of the general quality of life. Librarians in rural libraries are of great help in providing information services for all categories of users. Olowu (2004) commented that librarians are devoted to improving access to information and satisfying their clientele. In the 80's, the public libraries had what was known as Bookmobile service. It was introduced in Nigeria by the then regional government in the 60s. The motive for this was taking information services and resources to students living in rural areas. Primary and secondary schools pupils, who could not afford to buy text books, were able to borrow from the services. Okiy (2004) stated that the essence of Bookmobile service was to extend library service to everyone irrespective of your location. The role played by Bookmobile service was indispensable to Nigerian Youths in the 80s. Kibat (1990) commented that Bookmobile services have reached segments of the rural population that would not otherwise have any library facilities at all. This system no longer exists because of lack of fund.

Recently, the state government of Anambra state refurbished the public library at Awka and Onitsha. These libraries were given modern facilities with internet services. The facilities attracted more youths to the public libraries at Awka and Onitsha other than it used to be. We hope the good gestures will be extended to the rural libraries, so that the standard of living in rural areas will improve.

2. Statement of Problem

Rural Libraries in Nigeria have great contributions to make in youth development. Many youths dropped out from school and indulge in anti-social activities. The Nigerian Youths can still be put into useful living when rural libraries are equipped with information resources for their consumptions, also ICT facilities and internet services.

2.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the need for rural libraries for youth development specifically, the work intends to:

- 1) ascertain how youths dwelling in rural areas are using the rural libraries.
- 2) find out the kind of information services librarians are providing to youths using rural libraries.

2.2. Scope of the Study

The study was geographically limited to youths dwelling in rural areas in Anambra State of Nigeria while the content was delimited to investigating the roles rural libraries could play in youth development.

2.3. Research Questions

- 1) How do youths in community areas use the rural libraries?
- 2) What kind of information services are provided by librarians to youths using rural libraries?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study was a correlation study.

3.2. Population of the Study

Data was collected from 5 villages that have rural libraries in Anambra State: Nnewi, Abagana, Adazi-Nnukwu, Nkpologwu and Ihembosi. The respondents are 235. It was noticed that girls are greater in number, that registered in these libraries. They are between 16 t and 24 years of age. Only one librarian is seen in these rural libraries with non-qualified staff. The breakdown of the population is shown in **Table 1**.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to determine the population.

3.4. Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire was constructed for the collection of data. The questionnaire was designed for both the librarians in these rural libraries and youths who are registered in these libraries (**Table 2**).

4. Findings

It was gathered that many of these youths that are registered in rural libraries came with their text books to study in the libraries. They do not consult much of the libraries' materials. They also complained that the libraries materials are old, turned and have incomplete pages. The accommodations are cramped; shelves and chairs are in dilapidated condition. Reading tales are not sufficient for the users of the libraries. It was also learnt that only library officers are seen must of time in these libraries. The librarians are rarely seen.

5. Conclusion

The idea of developing rural libraries was to take information to the grassroots, irrespective of age or educational background. *Kibat (1990)* reported that, the neglect in development of rural libraries in Nigeria resulted in illiteracy and ignorance among young people dwelling in rural areas. Libraries play important roles in advancement of knowledge. Librarians who are in rural libraries have more contributions to make in providing information services for all categories of users. Information service provision should be for everyone, starting from children literatures to researcher's materials. Internet services should be provided in rural libraries; it can be educative for them. Library buildings should be erected specifically for libraries, with modern facilities. More librarians should be posted to rural libraries. If these items mentioned, will be provided in rural libraries, more

Table 1. The breakdown of the population.

Rural Library	Total nos. of libraries users	Total nos. of librarians
Abagana	10,984	1
Nnewi	23,529	1
Adazi-Nnukwu	7486	1
Nkpologwu	3421	1
Ihembosi	4452	1

Table 2. The number of registered youths and librarians working in these rural libraries.

Rural Library	Total nos. of youths registered	Total nos. of librarians
Abagana	7235	1
Nnewi	15,708	1
Adazi-Nnukwu	5918	1
Nkpologwu	2553	1
Ihembosi	3751	1

youths will be brought back to classroom to complete their education and will acquire better skillful professions. This will better their standard of living.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

For the youths using the library.

(A) How youths use the facilities of Rural libraries?

How often do you visit the library in a month?

Please supply the information-----

(B) I visit the library to

(a) read my own textbooks

(b) to chat with friends

(c) to borrow only novels

(d) to do class assignments

(C) How do you participate when there is an idea to be shared by youth?

(a) I actively contribute to ideas on youths

(b) I only listen

(c) I do not visit the library when there are such things

(D) Using my community library has great influence on me

(a) It increased my academic performances

(b) It increased my reading habit

(c) It made me to have good friends

For the librarians working in community library

a) how are books acquired for the youths?

b) Will the collection be useful to the youth in their academic and sports etc.?

c) how comfortable is the library's environment?

d) what kind of topics you do create for group discussions for the youths?

e) How do you treat their reference questions?

f) Are the non-librarians working with you very helpful for the services?

Result of the Questionnaire

It was gathered that the 60% of the youths visit their community libraries regularly. 70% prefer to come in with their textbook for class assignments. 40% borrow all kinds of literatures to read while at home. 15% consult reference materials. 65% of these youths participate actively when there is group discussion on youth.