

Books are for use: The position of libraries and librarians in promoting peace education in Nigeria and Africa (Guaa Akwukwo Gi)

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ABSTRACT

Books have been the veritable sources of knowledge in human history, and through the knowledge they preserve, peace in Nigeria and Africa can be achieved. Libraries are guided by laws in their provision of information resources and services. The first law of library science "Books are for use" places emphasis on usage rather than storage and this guarantees every user freedom to choose and read books of their interest without restriction. This paper therefore, dwells on the first law of library science, the position of libraries and librarians in providing access to information resources and services for peace education, challenges encountered and recommendations were made. This paper concluded that the world would be nothing without book.

KEYWORDS: Books, Libraries, Librarians, Peace, Peace Education

INTRODUCTION

Peace is a state of quiet or tranquility; freedom from disturbance or agitation; calm, repose; state of reconciliation after strife etc. Habu (2017) sees peace as the absence of any hostile or antagonistic relationship that may degenerate into a state of distorting a harmonious existence that could lead to war. UNICEF (2011) defines peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

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Books are for use is an obvious and self-evident statement. Dr. S. R. Ranganathan conceived the law in 1924. According to Unegbu, Alaehie and Madugba (2019), the earlier accent was on the preservation of books rather than on their use. It was the common practice in the medieval monastic libraries in Europe to have books chained to the shelves so that they could be preserved and not get lost in the process of being used. This was only a normal **urge** at a time when books were difficult to produce. This habit somehow continued even after the invention of printing which facilitated the easy production of several copies of each book. Although isolated examples of reluctance to permit the unrestricted use of books can be occasionally seen even today, the general position is that books are available for use without any hindrance. All policies relating to a library should be helpful in promoting the objective of books being put to the maximum use. This first law meant that books should not be shut away from users. Ranganathan saw that the chained books prevented their removal and that the emphasis was on storage and preservation rather than use, and he came up with this first law of library science.

The Implications of this Law for Libraries and Librarians in the Contemporary Era

The implications of this law for libraries and librarians in the contemporary era include:

1. Open Access: Access guarantees freedom to choose and enhance their uses. In open access, restriction in form of subscription is not advocated. Every reader should go to the shelves and choose a book of their interest. Books should be purchased that are relevant to the needs of the readers. Open access demands that the library should be kept open for long hours which suit the readers most. There should be personalized service (reference sources), which lead to greater use of books. This is because the resources in the library may not be fully used unless the reference librarian makes extra effort to make the users exploit the resources. Open access is part of the open science. Open science is defined by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2015) as: Efforts by researchers, governments, researchers, funding agencies or the scientific community itself to make the primary outputs of research publicly-funded research results-publications and the research data publicly accessible in digital formats with no or minimal restriction as a means of accelerating search.

2. Readership Promotion: Reading is so central to gaining knowledge and understanding the subject matter that Nwosu and Unagha (2014) state that the man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them. The purpose of education is to give students every advantage of making a good life for themselves, and one way is to take advantage of the richness and benefit of reading. According to Unagha (2021), reading brings about the following development to a person:

- **Vocabulary Acquisition:** A large vocabulary is essential for mastery of a language. The greater the command of vocabulary one has, the more the potential for success. People who read more will acquire a greater vocabulary that will better or enable them for their profession both in written and oral skills. We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading as reading provides opportunity to see words used in context.
- **Acquisition of Declarative Knowledge:** Reading has a profound effect on the accumulation of declarative knowledge. The world's storehouse of knowledge is readily available for those who read. Reading is a key to developing knowledge.
- **Promotion of Lifelong Learning:** The most important aspect of reading is that it promotes lifelong learning. One of the core mandates of school libraries arising from the first law of Library Science is to promote lifelong learning.

- **Acquisition of Critical Thinking Skills:** It would be difficult today to find a competent teacher who would argue against the case that reading is thinking. Reading is directly tied to the development of critical thinking skills. Reading is one of the primary mechanisms by which people exercise their intellectual faculties and increase their knowledge of the world, because reading sharpens our critical thinking-This activity in turn affects the way we act, having social and civil implications. Reading makes one informed, and if one is not informed one becomes deformed.
- **Economic Benefits:** Literacy is achieved through reading. Good readers generally have more financially rewarding jobs. One of such jobs is teaching. People with lower level of reading and writing ability do less well in the job market. Poor reading skills correlate heavily with lack of employment, lower wages and fewer opportunities for advancement (USNCA, 2007). Thus, the higher levels of reading results in higher earnings and occupational position for individuals because employers desire high levels of literacy from their employees.
- **Civil and Social participation:** Reading not only boosts one's image, academic and economic success but also awakens one's sense of social and civic responsibility. Non-readers are withdrawn in social activities, especially, if it is an enlightened society. Readers participate civically and socially and are likely to take up responsibilities. It improves self-esteem. It makes one remain current in civil events, and as a result more likely to participate in society.

3. Fighting Aliteracy: Illiteracy among Nigerians and Africans, with its social and economic implications, has become a growing concern in recent times. Illiteracy is the inability to read and write a particular language. However, a new form of illiteracy has emerged among those considered literate. This kind of illiteracy is called aliteracy. Aliteracy is the disease of the educated. Since alliterates are capable readers, the implication is that aliteracy is a choice that is being made. Reading, which was once indulged in as a pleasure is now often spurred as a chore, and people do not actually view it as fun anymore. It is quite clear that reading ability is not always matched by reading desire. This is true even among the very educated people. Aliteracy has recently received much of the blame for stagnating literacy skills that threaten the goals of a highly literate society (Nwosu & Unagha, 2014). Lebrun and Pelletier (2005) have identified seven (7) types of alliterates:

- **Stance Readers:** Those who read focusing on what happen when they are done, while with an aesthetic stance they live the adventure that unfolds in the book.
- **Dormant Readers:** Those who like to read but do not often make out time to read.
- **Impulsive Readers:** Those who browse through a number of books with little or no concentration and selective readers who are not interested in current events and they are not interested in details.
- **Resistant Readers:** Those who are stimulated very little by assigned readings and are more at ease with short texts related to their subject of interests.
- **Reluctant Readers:** Those who may not know that reading is enjoyable.
- **Uncommitted Readers:** Those who do not like to read but say they may read in the future. These readers have negative attitude about reading and their view of it shifts from enjoying the process to focusing on what is due when they finish the text.

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- **Unmotivated Readers:** Those who do not like to read and do not ever expect to change their minds. This category not only has negative thoughts about readers but they surround themselves with peers who harbour the same feelings. They usually call readers "strange" and "book boys".

4. Promoting Information Literacy: Another offshoot "Books are for use" is the promotion of information literacy. The fundamental purpose of higher education is the preparation of students for their future. If graduates and researchers of today and tomorrow are to flourish in the modern, fast-paced, high-tech world, they must have information seeking and technology skills. Information literacy is critically important in this regard because we are surrounded by a growing ocean of information on all formats. Not all information is created equal. Some are authoritative, current, reliable, but some are biased, out-of-date, misleading and false. The amount of information available is going to keep increasing. Information literacy is important to anyone (Unagha, 2011).

5. Extension Service: Extension Service (ES) is the activity of lending or delivering of works and other forms of information to users who are distant from a library or who may be relatively near but unable to travel to where the facility or resource centre is located. ES is the activity undertaken with the objective of reaching the group of people who may be unaware of the library service and collection. ALA (1983) defines it as the provision by a library of materials and services to individuals and organizations outside its regular service area, especially to an area in which library service is not otherwise available.

The Position of Libraries and Librarians in Promoting Peace Education in Nigeria and Africa

The need to promote peace education among the general populace of Nigeria and Africa has been receiving attention from organizations such as the National Library of Nigeria. This can be achieved through the followings:

- **Support for Education**

As the levels of education differ so are their levels of teaching and learning. The main role of library in education is provision of access to recorded knowledge/information to its community especially the formal education sector. Education will help enlighten the people from the primordial sentiments/thoughts that encourage ethno/religious identity consciousness and enthrone national consciousness and identity. Therefore, libraries and librarians at the various levels of education provides information materials to support the curriculum of its parent's school, starting from school libraries that provides learning resources for both primary and secondary schools to academic libraries that provides tertiary materials for post-secondary/tertiary or higher institutions as it variously called. Universities have additional mandate of research, so University libraries provides current primary and secondary research materials to advance the course of research in the university. The public library is not left out here as it is sometimes referred to as the "peoples' University" this is because it provides materials for the education of almost every segment of the society as it holds sway in handling lifelong learning. Libraries provides materials on peace and conflict studies, civic education, sociology, psychology, religion and other general reading materials that helps in enlightening and moulding citizens character, teaching them the right societal values etc. Libraries and librarians should also conduct researches on peace and conflict issues to generate new knowledge and direction in peace education towards the promotion of peace in their community both immediate and the wider community.

- **Provision of Free Access to Information**

Information is key to advancement in the life of an individual or a people. It is one of the major differences between the haves and have-nots. Right information has the capacity of liberating a person from the shackles of ignorance and poverty, as it helps you make or take the right decision per time. This information come in the form of human knowledge collected/generated, processed, preserved and disseminated in the right format to their various communities of service. Peace education entails passing on relevant information that will help prevent, manage and build peace in the world. People need to know what leads to conflict and the possible things to do.

Libraries and librarians provide various reading materials (information) that will enlighten the people thereby creating an informed society with little or manageable conflicts like ethno-religious conflicts witnessed mostly in less informed (developed) societies like Nigeria. According to Igwela and Nsirim (2018), the more informed you are, the less aggressive and arrogant you are. Access to public information would go a long way in bridging communication gap between the Government and its citizens, thus reducing agitations, protests and restiveness.

- **Teaching of Information and Study Skills**

Peace education is a global effort at creating a united and peaceful world through

Knowledge/information, it therefore entails handling with all seriousness. This is why libraries and librarians teach certain learning skills like information literacy and study skills to its users to enable them identify, access, evaluate information, develop skills and competencies in reading, writing, summarizing, paraphrasing, comprehension, critical thinking etc.

- **Current Awareness Service/Selective Dissemination of Information**

This service is used by libraries and librarians to keep busy scholars and researchers abreast of latest information materials in their chosen field(s). Peace and conflict studies researchers and other interested scholars who identifies with their libraries are meant to give their profiles, indicating their areas of interest and the type of information and or materials they need as well as the mode of notification and delivery of the materials. This is a specialized library service. The librarians involved in this must be up and doing in conducting literature search especially from newly arrived library materials and deliver same to the researcher.

- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage**

Preservation and conservation of cultural heritage had been the prime function of libraries especially, public and national libraries. Jabo and Bayero (2014) say that culture is a complex whole which include knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, custom and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Libraries especially public and national have direct charge to collect and preserve works/materials embodying the cultural heritage of their communities in all available formats and also make them available as at when needed, whether solicited for or not. The libraries can reach out to the public informing them of the existence of various materials of their cultural heritage which has the capacity to enlighten their minds on the norms and values of their society.

- **As Agent of Change in the Society**

Change is about the only thing in life that is constant. Societies have evolved over the years of which Nigeria is not an exception. This change cuts across our national life to include political, social, economic and even cultural among

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others. For Jabo and Bayero (2014) the objective of every social change is to establish a new order, where all citizens can hope to obtain justice, liberty and equality.

Libraries and librarians provide materials on social justice, human rights, gender equality, politics, civic education, corruption, good governance, poverty eradication, national consciousness etc. and other related materials that will awaken the consciousness of the readers to a rebirth giving way to the old order that is dividing and deepening our conflict. These materials would help our democracy to be rooted thereby guaranteeing peoples freedom, improved well-being and paving way for sustainable peace.

- **Cultivating Reading Culture/Habit**

This is particularly in the purview of school and public libraries, through the soft and entertaining reading materials they provide for children. According to Nwabueze and Iwekpeazu (2012) reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. This is because through reading, information can be acquired which bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance. Some conflicts are caused by ignorance as well as wrong information.

- **Outreach-Community Services**

This will serve the informal sector mostly. Libraries and librarians play the role of extension workers, reaching out to the outside community. They also take the message of peace to the citizens outside the confines of the library by organizing seminars, talks, conferences (with pictures and in slide presentation- for effective assimilation as the audience will be a mixed one covering people of divers age of understanding, walks/road shows, concerts/drama, cultural exhibition, book exhibitions, workshops etc. A sustained outreach for peace keep the people in constant consciousness of peaceful coexistence. Through this, the library imparts knowledge, skills and attitude which equip people to be peace builders. This process of peace building sees them through practical issues of conflict and deeper issues of relationships, human development, structural realities and re-orientate them by teaching them the right attitude to life and issues of life. Conflicts must be played down, giving its unacceptable and devastating consequences.

CHALLENGES

The challenges facing libraries and librarians in promoting peace education in Nigeria and Africa include:

- **Poor Funding:** Fund is a serious challenge affecting the development of education and libraries. The government does not fund the library adequately and this has caused a lot of problems. It hinders effective and efficient service delivery. This problem can be likened to lack of political will; and this has resulted to government negligence to fund library properly. Insufficient fund has led to inadequate provision of current and relevant library materials such as books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.
- **Dearth of Libraries:** Libraries and Librarians play an important role in the promotion of reading habits. However, these libraries such as school and public are either non-existent or not playing their expected role. State and local government, and proprietors of schools (government and individuals) have not

complied with library provisions in the National Policy on Education (NPE). Public libraries are not being established where they are needed. The few existing public libraries are neither adequately funded nor stocked with reading resources that can affect the lives of citizens.

- **Poor Provision and Access to Books:** Poor provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is another challenge facing the library towards reading promotion. Non availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate poor development of reading and attainment of permanent illiteracy. Libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.
- **Lack of Encouragement of Library Usage:** Teachers are not encouraging maximum use of the library and its resources because they are not giving pupils/students assignments/projects that would necessitate frequent visits to the library.
- **Lack of Appropriate Legislation:** The National Policy on Education (NPE) statements on the provision of libraries have not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation. The legislation should act as a road map to library programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reading of books has declined drastically over the past years as a result of adverse effects of economic, educational and political situations. Poor reading culture has equally led to poor perception and patronage of libraries by the citizenry. Imbibing the culture of reading can assist in finding solutions to socio-economic and political problems. Some of the ways to ameliorate the situation include:

- **Improved Funding:** Fund is crucial to the development of education and libraries; it is a *sine qua none* of performance. Therefore, the Nigerian government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to libraries. This would affect provision of library services. Funds should be earmarked for establishing, equipping and maintenance of libraries. Sufficient fund should be provided to acquire adequate, current and relevant library materials-books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.
- **Establishment of Libraries:** Efforts must be made by government at different levels to establish more libraries in their schools and for the private, club, communities, Religious bodies, organizations (NGOs and CBOs), Old Students Associations, professional bodies, and individuals should be encouraged to assist in the promotion of reading by establishing libraries or supporting already established school and public libraries. This can be done through stocking libraries with good reading materials that can impact on the lives of Nigerians. These libraries should also be provided with professionally qualified personnel to render services to the users.

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- **Continued Provision and Access to Books:** provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is a major contribution of the library towards reading promotion. Availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy. It has been found out that school libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.
- **Encouragement of Library Usage:** Teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving pupils/students assignments/projects that would necessitate frequent visits to the library. Such assignments/projects must be practical. They may entail reading a novel and summarizing it, or using the library resources to solve an environmental problem.
- **Appropriate Legislation:** It has earlier been pointed out that the National Policy on Education NPE statements on the provision of libraries have not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation to back up these statements. It is, therefore, been suggested that appropriate legislation be enacted to enforce compliance with the policy statements. Such legislation should stipulate stiffer penalties such as closure of school(s), for non-compliance with the policy statements.

CONCLUSION

Books are human ideas in permanent form. Without books, history is silent; literature is dumb; science and technology is crippled and thought and rational ideas would be at standstill. Without books, the development of modern society would have been impossible as they are engines of change and window on the world. Book in Igbo parlance is *Akwukwo*. Nobody ignores *akwukwo* in his area of influence. Before the creation of the world, God started with classification of things and that at the end of the age, when all mortals are called to judgement, only librarians will still have jobs. This is because, according to Revelation, 20;12, "...And Books were opened. Another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the Book." There shall be no ICT, no Internet. Only librarians will be at hand to organize and make the books available for use by God.

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