Re-positioning library and information services to meet the Teacher Preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria

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TEACHER PREPARATION and the Vision 20-20:20 in Nigeria

Edited by
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Teacher Preparation
And The Vision 20-20:20
In Nigeria

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Nkadi Onyegegbu
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A Publication of the Institute of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka

August 2010
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RE-POSITIONING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF TEACHERS FOR VISION 20:20:20 IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The paper discusses re-positioning library and information services to meet the teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria. Vision 20:20:20 is a dream of Nigeria to be counted among the leading 20 national economy in the world by the year 2020. Education is a powerful tool for training manpower including teachers needed to actualize this dream. The paper reiterates the fact that library and information services as an essential educational support service should be repositioned if the teacher preparation need for the vision is to be achieved. The roles of the library and information centers were highlighted in the paper. It was suggested that human capacity building and infrastructure development should be vigorously pursued in order to re-position the library and information centers for the challenge of teacher preparation for vision 20:20:20. The government, educational planners, stakeholders and philanthropists, it was recommended should give adequate recognition to library and information services.

Introduction
Vision 20: 20 is a comprehensive framework designed to stimulate economic growth in Nigeria. One of the main objectives of Vision 20:20 is to place Nigeria in the top 20 leading economies of the world by the year 20:20. To achieve this objective, Nigeria would have to compete with nations like the United States, Japan, Germany, China, and the United Kingdom, which have traditionally maintained the top five ranking of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (N. V. 20:20, 2010).

Vision 20:20:20 is an aspiration by which the Nigerian Government hopes to grow the size of the economy from its present position of 40th to
the 20th national economy in the world. That is to say that by the year 20:20, Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world and will be able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena. In the world ranking of economies by GDP, according to the World Development Indicator (2009), Nigeria is number 40, Indonesia is number 20. Therefore, to be among the 20 economies of the world by 2015, it will take the place of Indonesia and ahead of countries like Poland, Switzerland, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, South Africa, Thailand, Malaysia, Sweden, UAE etc within the next 11 years. Knowledge economy is one factor on which to judge the readiness of the nation for the aspiration of vision 20:20:20. A knowledge economy has been “defined as one in which knowledge and ideas are the main basis for promoting economic and social development”. It is an economy where knowledge is acquired, created, disseminated and used effectively to enhance economic development. Therefore, for any country to thrive in the knowledge economy it needs a well-trained workforce that is able to create and apply new technologies (NV 2020, 2010). Countries will achieve growth because they have invested in knowledge and others will stagnate because they have failed to do so. It is the knowledge divide that makes the difference.

Talking about vision 20:20:20 and the training for teachers rests with the issue of materials to work with to see that the set goals are achieved. These materials include human, financial, and other raw materials (Nwogu, 2009). The problem is perhaps that in vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria, teachers are hardly in the calculation. This is not supposed to be so.

Teachers in Nigeria are certainly operating in a rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment. The 21st century has been described as an era characterized by knowledge economy with a set of skills. According to World Bank/UNESCO (2000), “Participation in the knowledge economy requires a new set of human skills. People need to have higher qualifications and to be capable of greater intellectual independence... without improved human economy; countries will inevitably fall behind and experience intellectual and economic marginalization and isolation. The result will be continuing, if not rising, poverty”

Nigeria is still a developing nation which exhibits various cultural, political, social, and economic features such as poverty, high level illiteracy rate, high level of corruption, poor investment on education, erratic power supply, low-industrial economy, problematic education system, among others (Imogie, 2008). These characteristic features of Nigeria as a developing nation
pose great challenges for the education of the youths who have the greater portion of their lives to spend in the 21st century.

Education should prepare us for a changing society and should itself generate social change. The old problems no longer respond to the old solutions. It behooves us therefore to ensure that our children are adequately prepared today, so that they may find suitable answers to meet the needs and challenges of tomorrow. These needs and challenges are best accomplished through education whose bedrock is teachers. This is why irrespective of what we have been doing in the past or what we are doing now in teacher preparation, the emphasis should be focused on the challenges and changes we must courageously face and make in order to improve the prospect for the future. For Nigeria to march comfortably into and spend the rest of 21st century, we need a good number of adequately trained, devoted and committed teachers (Abdullahi, 2010).

In order to get this achieved, the library and information services must be repositioned as a vital educational support service that will bring about effective teacher preparation to achieve vision 20:20:20. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) identified the library as one of the most important educational services that every institution of learning needs to provide adequate support to learning, teaching and research. In reality, a visit to most of our libraries both at the secondary and post-secondary levels in Nigeria will convince one that there is negligence on the part of the authorities and educational planners towards the libraries as revealed by the studies of Daker, Gupiyem and Nwokedi (2007). We should understand that education cannot be re-engineered without re-engineering the library and information services, which stands as the cornerstone of any qualitative education in our society. Any person who has been involved in teaching at any level of educational system in Nigeria will agree with the fact that the objectives of the libraries have not been realized. In most of our schools where libraries seem to exist, the curriculum has not been properly supported with library resources and services. Some of the subjects offered in the schools have no books in the library to support their instruction.

Even where there are books, such books have outlived their usage. Students are found to depend on lesson notes given in the class, without cultivating the habits of reading because the students claim they cannot find relevant reading materials in the libraries. The horizon of their knowledge is supposed to be widened through reading and using other services offered by the libraries to complement what they have been taught in the classrooms.

It is a truism that today the falling standard of education in Nigeria can be attributed partly to lack of learning resources in our libraries. The non-
existence of adequate library and information services in our institutions of higher learning call for serious attention on the part of our educational planners and different authorities in our institutions of higher learning, if the desired teacher preparation for vision 20:20:20 should be achieved. The true position is that effective teacher preparation combined with socio-economic and vocational training within the framework of development will enhance the achievement of vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria.

The Roles of Libraries and Information Services in Teacher Preparation

The Libraries and Information Centres across the country can contribute meaningfully to teacher preparation through the various services offered in the libraries and information centres. The role of the library in reshaping the educational system of our country lies in its ability and capacity to provide information for the teachers in training as well as their teachers. Gupiyem (1997) observed that the role of libraries in educational development cannot be overstressed especially where adequate learning resources are available to the learners.

Therefore, meeting the teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 required re-positioning library and information services. This can be made possible if the type of library and information services suggested by Okpaliroha (1989) is developed and maintained. This type of library and information services suggested is that which:

- Contributes to academic achievement in all subjects.
- Increases the chances of success of students in institutions of higher learning or other professional pursuits.
- Provides students with vocational information to the choice of a suitable career.
- Helps in the discovery and development of special gifts and talents of the students.
- Serves as a centre of intellectual life of a school.
- Serves as a training ground for self reliance, self-discipline and perseverance.

Re-positioning Library and Information Services for Teacher Preparation

In the past, access to and utilization of quality information by university students were largely limited to books, journals, mimeographs etc. However, the development and widespread use of computer networks since
the end of World War II and the emergence of other information technologies have widened opportunities for students to obtain quality information for their academic progress and development. The speed with which revolution is information technology has taken place is phenomenal. This has affected the mode of instruction, curriculum and all other teacher training facilities at all levels of education. As such there is need for the libraries to reassess their facilities and services with a view to meeting to teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria. This calls for the acquisition and use of the sophisticated information and communication technology facilities which will help in beefing up services rendered by the library. Global advances in information and communication technology (ICT) in the last decade have had far-reaching consequences on library resources and services (Katsina, 2000).

Omekwu and Echezona (2008) observed that Information Technology has broken down physical barriers and as a result, libraries and the services they provide now have borderless territories. They went on to enumerate four implications of this development as follows:

- Libraries are now situated in Cyber Space.
- Library services are no longer constrained by time of opening and closing hours;
- Library users can access services in libraries beyond their country and continent, and
- The virtuality of information resources means that millions of users can access one resource at the same time.

As consequence, libraries now face competition as information providers. The library users are no longer captives. Students and scholars can increasingly by-pass the library to satisfy their information needs. These changes are disruptive, as they challenge the traditional role, purpose, and operations of the library. These developments must have prompted these questions: if the world is going digital, virtual, perhaps bookless, why should we go to the library? We can get all the information we need on the internet in the Cyber café or even at home or in the office (Dike, 2007). The shift to a digital environment brings the identity of the librarians under question. Librarianship was built upon a tradition of service, but service can no longer be delivered effectively without the application of technology. Libraries must create a more compelling web presence that attracts users. Everything possible should be done in the interest of delivering effective service that will provide a competitive advantage. The library profession needs a more compelling reason for existence than overseeing glorified study halls (Ekere and Ekere, 2008).
Hence the current revolution of ICTs in the provision of library/information services is attributable to the emergence of digital age otherwise referred to as digital economy or information age. The impact of ICTs in library/information services has profound implications for teacher education, social, and economic development by Nigeria (Grace, Kenny and Qiang, 2004). ICTs are tools that facilitate the production, transmission, and processing of information and these include computers, the Internet and telecommunications. Thus, modern libraries are seen as catalysts for socio-economic and technological development of nations, in that they provide timely access to information through ICTs to the citizenry. And due to the phenomenon of information explosion, users’ demands and expectations for improvement and efficiency in library/information services in the electronic environment are posing new challenges libraries in Nigeria. This situation calls for training using the modern facilities of information and communication technologies (ICT). The training will equip users with competencies needed to use the ICT facilities efficiently for greater service delivery.

Human Capacity Building

The challenge to meeting the teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria demands that libraries should embark on human capacity building in the provision of library/information services in the digital age in Nigeria is not debatable. Hence, major stakeholders including governments and library management should devise strategies to develop their staff (librarians) by providing opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) and training in the workplace (Adanu, 2007). This type of training is an indispensable tool of transforming library/information services to an enviable standard of meeting increasing level of users’ demands especially teacher preparation in Nigeria. Again, with relevant human capacity building programmes in ICTs for librarians, Nigeria will join their counterparts across the developed countries to provide efficient and sustainable library/information services to library patrons in the country. (Ahiauzu, 2008).

Infrastructural Development

One of the challenges facing Library and Information Service providers is the issue of infrastructural decay as well as inadequate information resources in libraries. If the teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 are to be met, librarians, library management, authorities in various institutions of learning should tackle the issue of infrastructural obsolescence and inadequacy very drastically. That is to say that they should not pay lip service
to addressing the problem. Concerted effort should be made to provide enough funds to enable libraries acquire the state of the art facilities including the ICT facilities as well as other audio-visual resources which will support teacher education instructions in no small measure. Giving the financial enablement, libraries should acquire adequate number of computers, CD-ROMS and other computer accessories that will enhance teaching and learning.

The old and antiquated educational books in the libraries should be weeded and replaced with current and relevant ones. It is a common sight in libraries in our institutions of learning to find these old, worn-out and undesirable books occupying the library shelves. Most of them are no longer being used and that is one of the reasons why library users do not patronize the library.

Some of the objectives of the academic libraries according to Edoka (2000) include to provide information materials required for the academic programmes of the parent institution and to provide research information resources in consonance with the needs of faculty and research students. For the teacher preparation needs to be met in different institutions undertaking teacher training that could be used to achieve vision 20:20:20, it becomes imperative that libraries should be equipped with these relevant information materials required to support the academic programmes of those institutions.

**The Challenge**

The realization of teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 through the support of effective library and information services depend on to a large extent on adequate investment on our libraries. The National Policy on Education (2004) enjoins government at all levels to provide educational services to institutions of learning at all levels of educational systems. It stressed that libraries are one of the most important educational services. Therefore government at all levels should provide funds for the establishment of libraries in the educational institutions and to train librarians for efficient services. The educational planners, stakeholders and philanthropists can also contribute much in this regard.

The government, educational planners, stakeholders and philanthropists in the education industry should give recognition to library and information services. They should do this by provision of funds to institutions for library purposes, provision of suitable reading materials, provision of ICT facilities, and training and retraining of staff to effectively render desired services. The task requires the support of philanthropists, corporations, financial institutions and not only the government.
Conclusion

The achievement of teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 will depend to some extent on the provision of effective and efficient library and information services in Nigeria. The library and information service is a vital organ of any educational enterprise. The need for library and information services to be re-positioned in line with the new trends in the instruction as well as learning required to train teachers cannot be over-stressed. Curricular changes and methodology aimed at enhancing teacher preparation demands that the library and information centres should take adequate measures to rise to the challenge.

As a result, library and information centres should acquire new books and other ICT infrastructure and embark on human capacity building in order to be equipped with all that is needed to meet the teacher preparation needs for vision 20:20:20 in Nigeria.

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