

Full Length Research

Multilingualism In Library Collection Development For Extensive Information Service Delivery In Academic Libraries In Nigeria

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Accepted 25 April 2025

Tertiary institutions train manpower for national development. Primary and secondary levels of education are foundational. Tertiary education is geared towards manpower training. Thus, addressing manpower development for any nation is embedded in the various programmes offered in the tertiary curricula of which Library and Information Science is among. The library in the tertiary institutions serving teaching, learning and research purpose for personal, community and of course national development is academic library. Hence the medium of communication both in teaching and learning as well as collection development handled by the library professionals to serve every discipline in the tertiary education: university, college of education and polytechnic is a key factor. The medium of communication is language whether verbal, written or sign. Language is the only medium for idea/information/knowledge acquisition and transfer. Hence education whether formal or informal is through language and this is best achieved in the language the teacher and learner understands.

Keywords: Tertiary institutions, Tertiary education, communication, Library and Information Science

Cite This Article As: Onyenachi, J.C., Olowookere, O. (2025). Multilingualism In Library Collection Development For Extensive Information Service Delivery In Academic Libraries In Nigeria. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 13(3): 87-90

INTRODUCTION

In the Nigeria National policy on Education (NPE 2013) teaching from early child education that is early child to one year pre-primary has to be in mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community. From primary to secondary the pupil and student are to learn one Nigerian Language. This NPE from Primary states "the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject."

"From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects.

It is clear that Nigeria National policy on Education from its first creation in 1976 uptill date favours foreign language - English as medium of instruction. Based on this, in tertiary institution, English is the medium of instruction. Nigeria languages come up only as subject, for those that have interest in choosing them as course of study. While International Federation of Library and Archives (IFLA, 1976) section K which is devoted to

curriculum in tertiary institutions upholds that “the study of foreign languages is important within the general studies framework, the need for languages will vary from country to country “(P209 - 223)”. This IFLA stand should have given direction to every programme of study in Nigeria tertiary institution to incorporate Nigerian languages as medium of instruction too.

The medium of publishing educational materials for teaching and learning in Nigeria from early child learning to tertiary is equally English except Nigeria language as a subject. This neglect of Nigerian languages as medium of communication for teaching and learning as well as production of teaching and learning information resources is adversely affecting the education outcome and national development in general. Every education is geared toward citizen’s and general society development. When the citizens are trained through foreign language communication, it is obvious that not all will clearly understand the teaching content. Most items in the people’s language will merely have a close form of representation in the foreign language unlike when those contents are taught in the people’s language.

The above situation equally affects the preparation of librarians in Nigeria. The language of communication in teaching and learning, as well as the teaching and learning resources are in foreign language – English. The professional is prepared towards fitting into English speaking world to the neglect of the home base the education is meant for. IFLA that is international library Association recognizes that in the library school curricula that languages will vary from country to country, the Nigeria library educators still keep to English as medium of instruction in teaching and learning, as well as in production of information resources. The language of interaction between the library services delivery professional and the information seekers in the libraries is also English. The collection development in academic libraries in Nigeria is English based information resources. The library schools in Nigeria opt for English and French as minor courses among others with the neglect of Nigerian languages. The Librarian in training who will work in the libraries as well as be educators are equipped in Foreign languages.

Library education is intended to furnish prospective practitioners of librarianship with the knowledge and skills necessary for professional practice. The curriculum should therefore be versatile enough to accommodate all the skills requirements for effective service. One of such skills is the language skill. The need for possession of language skill among librarians is underscored by its key function as a medium of communication. Service provision in the library is essentially a communication activity and hence, the provider and the beneficiary must stand on common language for a successful transaction (Nwosu and Onyenachi; 2009).

In spite of the incontrovertibility of the assertion above,

no concerted efforts have been made in Nigeria to articulate the language needs of would-be librarians and plan to equip them during professional training. The status-quo runs on the assumption that the English Language is sufficient as the language of library service which, expectedly, the librarians in-training has acquired along the various levels of schooling starting from primary to tertiary.

This paper draws attention to non-local language content as the perceived loop hole in planning curriculum for library education in Nigeria. The paper therefore advocates for inclusion of at least the three major Nigerian languages in the library school curriculum. The languages are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Though Nigeria is a multilingual nation with at least Six Hundred and Eighty seven (687) Languages (Crozier and Blench 1992) in Nwaegeuo (2002), however the three major languages serve as common language of communication with large coverage in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The three: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba could be referred to as indigeneous linguafranca in Nigeria. Hence Preparing Nigerian manpower from primary to tertiary institution is a plus and great strength for national/economic development understanding in content of creativity innovation, technology, industrialization and sustainability among others.

The Nigeria mentality that one’s own language (indigenous) makes one limited to local development rather than modern/global is a misnomer. China, Japan, Korea, Isreal etc development, the envy/desire of nations are technologically rooted in their local languages, yet they impact the world. Foreigners to those countries are made to first undergo language proficiency training in those Nations languages before any other academic content the person has come to acquire. This stands as advantages not a hindrance and whatever academic, technology, innovation, creativity etc one is to do finds relevance in the environment and beyond to which the entire world is benefiting.

Library which is the hub of information resources acquisition and dissemination for every discipline in the world should be the focrum in local language content for the professional training. The language should not just be as a subject alone but the information materials for all disciplines should be published in multilingual version: English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. With this the educational products of Nigeria are multilingually prepared benefiting locally and internationally. If the local language compulsory inclusion in the curricula content of developed nations have benefitted them and the world at large, why should Nigeria indigenous language work counter?

Librarians that is multilingual prepared, knows the English and the indigenous languages and so competent in serving the patron seeking information need in all the disciplines effectively in the people’s language as well as

English where need be. IFLA's (1976) recognition of the need for language inclusion in library curriculum though it accords universal relevance to the English language, it strongly recognizes that "the need for language will vary from country to country". The implication of this is that individual countries should recognize their peculiar language needs and provide for them in their library schools curricular. Curricular planners for library education in Nigeria should be sensitive to the local language needs of products of the system for practice.

In line with the above, Iwuji (2003); Nwosu and Onyenachi, (2009) among others, call for curricular modification in Nigeria in favour of local conditions. The library schools should be sufficiently innovative to adjust their curricular to meet local conditions. Comparative librarianship makes the basic assumption that the texture of librarianship should reflect the unique factors and peculiarities of the environment. Curricular planners for library education in Nigeria should implement the IFLA language standard by adding local language content into the curricular. This should ensure that a professional in librarianship should be able to develop library collection for various disciplines in Nigeria languages as well as serve the library information seekers, the information materials they need through the language best suitable for understanding and utilization as to meet desired information need.

The idea of curricular indignation is predicated on the need to enhance the cultural and social relevance of education. Librarianship being one of the course of study in Nigeria education must recognize the socio-cultural differences between the Nigerian society and the western world from where library education and practice were adopted. Consequently, Nigeria library education programme must be homegrown reflecting certain nuances that are culturally dictated. Full-scale adoption of the conventional library education program imported from the West may not augur perfectly in Nigeria.

Evidently, developed world implement the IFLA stand on language being country favoured irrespective of any foreign language such country adopts. Outside Nigeria, Foreign students are made to learn language of the country where they have come to study a course that is not language, why? If your course is not the country's language, why must the students be made to learn the language of the country he has come to study a different course altogether? It is obvious that knowledge of the language in immediate environment where the learner is, facilitates the learners' knowledge in whatever discipline/course of study as well as the practicability of the knowledge acquired. If the foreign student is not to be taught in that nation's language, since the course he/she is to study is not language, why put the language learning as compulsory, even before the actual course the student has come to study?

Nigeria education is different in that English as medium

of teaching and learning is adopted from primary to tertiary even as English is not her language rather it is a foreign language. In that same irony NPE (2013) has equally adopted French as a second language for learning in Nigeria yet the Nigerian languages are left to the fate of whoever is interested in studying them as subject/course.

Basically the call for inclusion of Nigeria languages in the training programme of library schools in Nigeria is to eliminate the language barrier posed by local languages in the course of service delivery by library professionals. Nigerian languages are the indigenous languages spoken by the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. These languages are natural to the people and have serve them as effective means of exchanging thoughts and ideas.

According to Horowitz (1998) in Nwosu and Onyenachi (2009), "social roles, languages, history, agriculture and construction skills as well as crafts are passed from generation to generation through the people's language" Hence science, technology, and arts are natural and in education (teaching and learning) from primary to tertiary will definitely have rich knowledge content when these subjects/courses are delivered in local content, as well as the published information resources for teaching, learning and research. Through this, collection development in Nigeria libraries will be enriched with information resources produced in the people's languages not just everything in English. This cut across every type of library not just public library. The library school train manpower for all the types of libraries with same curricula. The training doesn't prepare the professionals in a type of library excluding others. Hence the idea that the language curricula concerns those studying public library does not arise.

The information needs of the modern society are myriads and varied. They include agriculture, trade, craftwork, transportation, economy, politics, health, nutrition, religion, local history, literature, culture etc. these are the information need citizens seek. Whichever type of library they go to for information seeking be it: Academic, Special, National, Public and School, they should not just interact with the librarians in the local language, the information resources should be available in the people's language as well.

This is not advocacy for the non schooled (non-literate), rather advocacy for Nigeria education curricula in general and librarianship in particular which is a discipline that serve every other discipline offered in every educational level from primary to tertiary. It is librarianship that produce manpower that serve tertiary institutions, research institutes, the lower level education (primary and secondary) and of course the entire citizen. By nomenclature tertiary institution libraries are known as Academic library; Research institutions are special libraries; primary and secondary institutions are school libraries while the National and Public libraries serve the

entire citizens whether educated or not. The language advocacy is not for serving the non-educated, it is for the benefit of all. Developed nations already have language inclusion in their educational curricula, Nigeria is doing itself a disservice and remain non-developed by relegating her language inclusion in her education curricula.

In advancing the use of multilingual language into library collection development it is vital and critical development also in the extension services be it agriculture, politics, religion, technology, entrepreneurship etc. the extension service provider and the beneficiary needs communication/interaction in the language both understand. This will make an interpreter not necessary because there is no communication barrier. Hence the adoption of multilingualism in the collection development of the library will surely not require an interpreter for the use of the information materials. Major function of the extension workers is to enable beneficiary engaged in every aspect of economic development. Individual development leads to society/national development and the value chain: to obtain information, skills and technologies to solve their problem is achieved. (Kristin, 2009).

The traditional approaches or communication are classified as one-way multipurpose and two-way multipurpose sources. The one-way multipurpose sources include: television, radio, public campaign, leaflet, pamphlet, newspaper and magazines, while the two-way multipurpose communication sources include village farms, fields demonstrations, trainings and study tours (Adhijuru and Birthal; 2009).

There is need for library collection to be built up in multilingual languages that will enable every information seeker to have access to information. The major idea of library having or comprising multilingual collection is to change from past to present. In modern age people are communicated to each other in different languages for disseminating and accessing information. Library should provide an effective balanced, and substantial collection for each ethnic, cultural or linguistic group in the community.

The library must make every effort to determine the potential need for services as a preliminary step for collection development. The effective way to this is to ensure all materials should be acquired in a variety of formats, including print, audio-visual, and computer software. In addition to this, where there is a shortage of materials in one format, the increased provision of circulating materials in another format should be considered as an alternative. Where there is a lack of written materials in a language library should encourage the recording of materials from the oral tradition in appropriate formats.

In promoting multilingualism in library collection development for expansive information service delivery in

academic libraries the following steps must be strictly followed:

- Libraries should facilitate, encourage and sponsor the presentation of original materials that relate to the heritage of local, ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups.
- Libraries should catalogue all materials in the original language and script. They should provide subject access both in English and in the original language. Bibliographic information must be transliterated for staff use.
- Multilingual collections housed separately should be visible and accessible to the information seeker.
- In the case of cultural diversity and because the population served comprises various cultures each specific cultures must be considered in the development of programming and services.
- In conclusion libraries should offer continuing education or staff development programme that promote the cultural, ethnic and linguistic awareness of the staff as to enhance their abilities in dealing with ethnically different patrons.

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