



Role of Abia State Public Library Board in Continuing Education

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Abstract

The paper investigated The Role of Abia State Public Library Board Services in Adult Continuing Education Survey method was used as research design. Instruments for data collection are observation checklist and questionnaire. The population is 150 staff made up of 15 librarians and 17 library offices (Para-Professionals) and 102 support staff. No sampling because the population is manageable. Findings from the study show the following: collection of Abia State Library Board as at 2021/2022 holding are Fictions, Non-fictions, Textbooks, Journals, Pictures, Reference materials, Television sets, and Braille materials; The government should ensure that adult citizens are properly provided for as to gain from continuing education; Adequately staffed with quality and competent personnel; Well funding by the government for provision of information; Automated for information delivery in this electronic age; and constantly electrified to make the learning space properly lit and cooling from fan/air conditioner;

Keywords: Abia State Public Library Board, Continuing Education

Introduction

Public library is library established by the government using the tax of citizens and other public fund available. It is to cater for all the knowledge acquisition areas the citizen desire. There is no limitation to collection and use of information materials and services in the public library. Public library is known as the people's university. One is free to get information/knowledge in any area to meet whatever information need one desires. Public library is expected to provide library services to every category of users to which adults are included. Public library in Abia State with her eleven (11) branches has reading rooms for citizens in the various locations where they are cited. Public library is library established by the government using the tax of citizens. It is to cater for all the knowledge acquisition areas the citizen desire. There is no limitation to collection and use of information materials and services in the public library (Kalu and Umebali, 2019).

Concept of continuing education which is where adult education is embedded stems from the realization that age should not be barrier to being educated hence continuing education was envisioned by the government to give all citizens equal opportunity to be educated. This has been in the Nigeria philosophy for education translated into the National Policy for Education (NPE) since 1977 till date. Continuing education enhances constant upgrading of knowledge for citizens. To enjoy this privilege, public library is always open for all even on weekends this is to ensure reading opportunity to those who cannot make use of the library Monday to Friday due to their nature of work. Public library being knowledge acquisition centre for all citizens irrespective of age, religion, culture, level of literacy etc is expected to serve as veritable resource centre for learning in general and adults in particular who were not opportuned to have formal education.

In Nigeria public libraries are not directly charged to handle continuing education. It has a commission under ministry of education known as adult and non-formal education. In developing collection by public library, the curriculum base/ guide and or the policy for collection development is the citizens (Kalu and Umebali, 2019). Excuse is not accepted for non inclusion of any citizen's information need. Age, religion, profession, tribe etc. must be taken care of. Public library provides materials in the appropriate media to support formal and informal learning processes (Kelechi, 2020). All age groups must find materials relevant to their needs. Collections and services of the public library include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials (IFLA Manifesto 2011).

Adults are major target audience in continuing education because most of them missed education at the early years when they could have been pupils and students (Akparobore, 2011). To make sure age is not barrier to being educated the concept of adult continuing education was envisioned by the government to give all citizens equal opportunity to be educated. This has been in the Nigeria philosophy for education translated into the National Policy for Education (NPE) since 1977 till date.

One is free to get information/knowledge in any area to meet whatever information need one desires. Many enroll in formal examination while self-studying using information materials from the public library. The continuing education areas/aspects citizens undertake are too broad to make a list off and the type of library to meet such continuing learning is the public library (Jabo and Ubandawaku, 2019). In Nigerian communities, these adult learners make use of venues like church premises, community halls and sometimes available school environments in the evenings for their educational activities and contacts. Both the learners and the teachers rely mainly on the public library that is always open for all even on weekends to provide for their learning materials and other related needs.

Public library Abia State Library Board had its origin from the Eastern Nigerian Library Board. With the creation and recreation of States, Abia State came into existence on 27th August 1991. The branch in Umuahia North which was a branch under Eastern Nigeria, as well as a branch under Imo State was upgraded to the Statues of a Board because it's location is Umuahia which is Abia State Capital. The current Abia State Library Board, inherited ten (10) branches out of the seventeen (17) divisional/branch libraries which belonged to the old Imo State. Presently, the board has eleven (11) branches. The board has 8 departments namely: Administration, Circulation, Reference, Catalogue, Reprographic, Bindery, Children's Department, and the handicapped/physically challenged.

Public library in Abia State with her eleven (11) branches has reading rooms for citizens in the various locations where they are cited. The Board which is the head quarter has the largest collection and user patronage. Its location at the state capital gives it advantage of higher patronage than the ones in the villages. Hence this study will examine role of Abia State public library in adult continuing education using the Library Board Headquarter Umuahia as a case study.

Statement of the problem

Public library is library established by the government using the tax of citizens and other public fund available. It is to cater for all the knowledge acquisition areas the citizen desire. There is no limitation to collection and use of information materials and services in the public library. To make sure age is not barrier to being educated the concept of adult continuing education was envisioned by the government to give all citizens equal opportunity to be educated. This has been in the Nigeria philosophy for education translated into the National Policy for Education (NPE) since 1977 till date. In Nigeria public libraries are not directly charged to handle adult education it has a commission under ministry of education known as adult and non-formal education. However public library being knowledge acquisition centre for all citizens irrespective of age, religion, culture level of literacy etc is expected to serve as veritable resource centre for learning in general and adults in particular who were not opportuned to have formal education.

The type of library to provide the information resources and services needed for continuing learning is the public library. In spite of the fact that public library in Abia State with her eleven (11) branches has reading rooms for citizens in the various locations where they are cited, and the Board which is the head quarter has the largest collection and user patronage, visits of the researchers to the library Board and some of the branches reveals that the patronage is more of children and youths mainly during holidays.. It becomes obvious that adults hardly patronize Abia State Public library. With public library locations at the state capital and villages, one could have expected that adults will take advantage of this service to get education which they missed as children or youth. The researchers therefore try to investigate reasons for this non seizure of opportunity. Is it that the adults are not aware such educational opportunity is available through public library? The library collection are the mainly for children and youths? To understand why adults are not showing interest in continuing education through the information materials and services available in Abia Sate Public library, the researchers therefore need to empirically study the role of Abia State Public Library Board Services in Adult Continuing Education using the Library Board in Umuahia the headquarter cited at the state capital as a case.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of Abia State public library in providing adult continuing education services to the citizens.

Research questions that guided the study are:

- 1 What are the information materials available in the Abia State Library Board Umuahia for continuing education?
- 2 What are the services available at the Public library for continuing education?
- 3 What are the challenges of Abia State Library Board Umuahia in providing services for continuing education?

Literature review

Public library provision of information resources for continuing education in Nigeria

Public libraries are community information center; they provide information irrespective of formats, space and time. Various services are offered in public libraries. Ibe (2014) defined public library services as those jobs performed by public libraries for the benefit of the general public whom they are meant to serve. Excuse is not accepted for non inclusion of any citizen's information need (Jacinta, 2011). Age, religion, profession, tribe/culture etc. must be taken care of in information resources provision and service delivery.

Public library provides materials in the appropriate media to support formal and informal learning processes. Adult continuing education is among the education needs public library caters for in information provision and service delivery Education enables the citizens attain literacy which is a prerequisite for any success in national development. Information resources provided by public library include book and non-book materials to meet the educational needs and support the efforts of the continuous education programmes to help contribute to the growth of a nation. According to Apotiade (2002) Public libraries can play their role of information provision by making available journals, newspapers and all other reading materials in the indigenous language so that education will be available at the grassroots. The public Library makes information resources on everything available to empower people and communities as it redistributes global intellectual

capital. According to Pateman (2011), the primary role of public library is to provide the best information resources and facilities suitable to all the divergent groups in the community.

Public library provision of services to enhance continuing education in Nigeria

Public library provides access to knowledge, information and works of art and imagination through a range of resources and services. According to IFLA (2011) manifesto public library services include the loaning of books and other media. The lending section of the public library provides reading materials that can be consulted in the library as well as borrowed out to registered users. IFLA (2011) manifesto provided for public library services to citizens which include: provision of books and other materials (print and electronic media) for use in the library, readers' advisory services, reservation of information materials to users as need arises, organization of seminars and conferences to educate users on continuing education; organization of adult literacy programmes in the community. By doing this, public libraries would have successfully carried out a literacy campaign since adult literacy programme would aid literacy (Apotiade, 2002).

From the manifesto as bench mark, public library services equally include: **Educational services:** Public libraries provide varieties of resources and services to support education at all levels. IFLA/UNESCO (2001) as cited in IFLA (2011) pointed out that access to information is the basic human right. Today, there is so much information available than ever before in the world's history. Public libraries acquire, process, organize and disseminate information free to all citizenry. **Information Awareness Services:** Public libraries provide information awareness services by spreading authentic information on current issues such as Covid-19 and other health matters. They also provide information on politics and governance. As a public service which is open to everybody, the public library has a key role of collecting, organizing and disseminating information, as well as providing access to a wide range of information sources. The public library has a particular responsibility to collect local information and make it readily available. **Reading Space/Environment:** This is a basic facility to be provided by any library. Standard reading rooms/halls with adequate ventilation and lighting provision; reading tables and chairs are provided for users to create a conducive and comfortable atmosphere for reading and research. IFLA/UNESCO (2001) as cited in IFLA (2011) recognized the importance role that library

buildings play in public library service provision. For this, they are designed to reflect the functions of the library service; accessible to all users and sufficiently flexible to accommodate new and changing services. **Internet Facilities:** The contribution of internet and its wide range of current information to today's research cannot be overemphasized. The internet brings information about uncountable researches and write-ups all over the world together and to the doorsteps of researchers. Anyakoha (2005) put it that with internet, adult learners are no longer restricted to libraries within their vicinity. The existence of what is called virtual library is brought to lime light. Some Nigerian public libraries, though few, do provide internet services for their users and have an internet services section within their libraries as well as a learning resource centre outside the library. All these are meant to aid adult learners and other users in research. Services provided by the internet section are E-mail services, browsing for information in so many fields of knowledge, on-line registrations for local and international examinations and retrieval of results of such examinations. **Photocopying Facilities:** Photocopying facility is crucial for the public library to enhance better services to its users. Some other electronic facilities and audio-visual materials are used in the public libraries for special programmes and activities such as children's programmes and conference/workshops; such gadgets as television, video players, CD players, and projectors etc. **Children Library Services:** Public libraries expose children to information resources as early as possible. They provide picture books, storybooks, cartoons, games, poems, children's magazine, textbooks, fiction and non-fiction for children and young adults. The idea of children's library services being taken care of by the public library is an age-long phenomenon. These services are presented in colourful mode to educate the children and help them imbibe reading habit. **Reference and Information:** The reference/Nigerian section as it is popularly called, of the public libraries houses useful materials to support education and research. These are called reference works. A reference work has been described to be a compendium of information usually of a specific type compiled in a book; (Wikipedia 2008). Such works as maps, dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, handbooks/manuals, journals and other periodicals like newspapers and magazines are all reference works.

From IFLA (2011) other services provided by public libraries include storytelling hours, information literacy services, discussion groups/talk shows,, reading promotion campaign/

competition, mobile library services, library book/week, cultural services, recreational services, public library-community centre/ public enlightenment centre, exhibitions and extension services.

Challenges of Public Library in providing services for education in Nigeria

According to Onyenachi (2016), Onyenachi and Igbokwe (2021) and Onyenachi (2022) challenges in serving users in Public/National Library in Abia State include: Poor funding for provision of information; Non automation of library operation; Gap between services and real information services; Poor power supply to make the learning space properly lit and cooling from fan/air conditioner; Insensitive attitude of government towards adult continuing education; Lack of adequate information services; Poor library facility for adult learning; Inadequate space for adult continuing education and Lack adequate manpower.

Methodology

Survey method was used as research design. Instruments for data collection are observation checklist and questionnaire. The population is 150 staff made up of 15 librarians and 17 library offices (Para-Professionals) and 102 support staff. No sampling because the population is manageable. The checklist was to identify the information materials available in Abia State Library Board as well as the services rendered while the questionnaire was to elicit responses on the challenges of Abia State Library Board in providing information materials for adult continuing education

Analysis

Table 1: Checklist of available resources at the Public library for continuing education

S/N	Information Recourses	Available	Not Available
1.	Fiction books	√	-
2.	Non-Fiction books	√	-
3.	Textbooks	√	-
4.	Journals	√	-
5.	Newspaper	-	√
6.	Magazines	-	√

7.	Pictures	√	-
8.	Posters	-	√
9.	Manuscripts	√	√
10.	Reference materials	√	-
11.	Television sets	-	-
12.	Radio	-	√
13.	CD- ROMs	-	√
14.	Globe	-	√
15.	Film	-	√
16.	Records and Tapes	-	√
17.	Cultural Materials/Artifacts	-	√
18.	Internet Resources	√	-
19.	Braille materials	-	√
20.	Toys		

Table 2: Checklist of available services at the Public library for continuing education

S/N	Services	Available	Not Available
1.	Recreation service	√	-
2.	Lending service	√	-
	Reference service	√	-
3.	Internet service	-	√
4.	Media resource service (Television)	√	-
	Media resource service (Radio)	-	√
5.	Extension/outreach service	-	√
6.	Story telling/oral tradition service	√	-
	Film show service	-	√
7.	Mobile library service	-	√
8.	User education service	√	-
	Exhibition of library materials	√	-

9.	Information repackaging/translation	-	√
10.	Readership promotion service	√	-
	Career information/ advisory service	-	√
11.	Library tour service	-	√
12.	Library picnic service	-	√
	Cultural exhibition service	-	√
13.	Service for special groups	√	-

Source: Abia State Library Board services 2021/2022

Table 2 shows the ticked (√) under availability as services Abia State Library Board render to continuing education library users

Table 3: Responses on challenges of Umuahia Public Library in providing services for continuing education

S/N	Challenges	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	
1	Poor funding for provision of information	28	2	-	-	3.9	
2	Non automation of library operation	28	2	-	-	3.9	
3	Gap between services and real information services	28	-	2	-	3.8	
4	Poor power supply to make the learning space properly lit and cooling from fan/air conditioner	27	2	1	-	3.8	
5	Insensitive attitude of government towards adult continuing education	26	2	2	-	3.8	
6	Lack of adequate information services	25	1	4	-	3.7	

7	Poor library facility for adult learning	25	3	2	-	3.8	
8	Inadequate space for adult continuing education	25	4	-	1	3.8	
9	Lack of adequate manpower	23	6	-	-	3.7	

Source: Responses on challenges of Umuahia Public Library in providing services for adult continuing education in 2021/2022

Table 3 shows that all the variables are above 2.5 mean agreeing that they are all challenges of Umuahia Public Library in providing services for adult continuing education

Discussion of findings

Collection of Abia State Library Board as at 2021/2022 holding the following information materials: Fictions, Non-fictions, Textbooks, Journals, Pictures, Reference materials, Television sets, and Braille materials. This agrees with IFLA Manifesto (2011) which states that collections and services of the public library include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. Public libraries can play their role of information by making available journals, newspapers and all other reading materials in the indigenous language so that education will be available at the grassroots. This agrees with Apotiade (2002) who states that public library making available journals, newspapers and all other reading materials in the indigenous language will enable education reach the grassroots.

Services Abia State Library Board render for adult continuing education are recreation, lending, reference, media service (television), storytelling/oral, tradition cultures, user education, exhibition of library materials, and services to special groups. These agree with IFLA (2011) and Ibe (2014). Supporting the above is Pateman (2011) who states that the primary role of public library is to provide the best information resources and facilities suitable to all the divergent groups in the community. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of art and imagination through a range of resources and services.

Services of Abia State Public Library do not enhance adult continuing education as the research findings show. This agree to Onyenachi (2016), Onyenachi and Igbokwe (2021) and Onyenachi

(2022) whose investigations show that challenges in serving users in Public/National Library in Abia State are: Poor funding for provision of information; Non automation of library operation; Gap between services and real information services; Poor power supply to make the learning space properly lit and cooling from fan/air conditioner; Insensitive attitude of government towards adult continuing education; Lack of adequate information services; Poor library facility for adult learning; Inadequate space for adult continuing education and Lack adequate manpower.

Conclusion:

To make sure age is not barrier to being educated the concept of adult continuing education was envisioned by the government to give all citizens equal opportunity to be educated. This has been in the Nigeria philosophy for education translated into the National Policy for Education (NPE) since 1977 till date. Public library being knowledge acquisition centre for all citizens irrespective of age, religion, culture level of literacy etc is expected to serve as veritable resource centre for learning in general and adults in particular who were not opportuned to have formal education. The research findings for the current study identified challenges that Abia state public library deficient in being relevant in adult continuing education for the citizens.

Recommendations:

Abia State Public Library being library established by citizen's tax for the purpose of knowledge acquisition and knowledge upgrading by the citizens should be:

- 1) The concern of government to ensure that adult citizens are properly provided for as to gain from continuing education;
- 2) Adequately staffed with quality and competent personnel;
- 3) Well funding by the government for provision of information;
- 4) Automated for information delivery in this electronic age;
- 5) Constantly electrified to make the learning space properly lit and cooling from fan/air conditioner;

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