

Consequences of Defective Public Relation in Nigerian Special Libraries

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Abstract: Special libraries contribute significantly to national development. Unfortunately the connection between special libraries and national development has not been fully known and established for Nigeria and her institutions to understand due to defective public relations. The resultant effect has been unpalatable on Nigerian special libraries, Nigerian institutions and ultimately on national development. To address this, the paper examines the concepts of special libraries, national development, defective PR and went on to look at the relationship between special libraries and national development, and further discusses causes of defective public relation and the consequences on Nigerian special libraries and proffer the way forward and conclude that indeed defective PR has given Nigerian special libraries a neglected, undervalued, underfunded misconceived, misconstrued, misrepresented image among other effects such as lack of attention and so on that result to poor information resources and information services. Though surmountable, the task is herculean and the way forward among other things include building image of library, possession of higher qualifications; development of research and presentation skills which must start now as Nigerian society seeks accelerated national development.

Keywords: Consequences, Defective PR, Special Libraries, National development, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Special libraries like other types of libraries are established to meet unique information needs of parent institutions. The libraries are attached to government institutions or agencies, organizations, corporations, associations, business organizations, individuals and so on (Shidi, Aju & Ashaver 2014). Individually and collectively, these libraries contribute significantly to national development through information provision to parent institutions. Information provided is for daily execution of parents' institutions activities towards meeting society's needs. Unfortunately this connection has not been clearly established for Nigerians to understand. Aguolu and Aguolu(2002) corroborating assert that the primary problem of library profession in Nigeria is being misunderstood by the members of the society. This is quite true but it is also true of members of institutions in Nigerian society. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) this emanates from a high illiterate rate (bordering on 75% of the population), lack of appreciation of the crucial value of information in the solution of complex economic, political and technological problems; a misdirected educational system that is based upon parrot learning and sets an inordinate store on paper qualifications, acquired through prolonged schooling,

mistaken to be necessarily prolonged learning, and from excessive materialism that has infested the society that shows little regard for intellectual efforts or for things of the mind. These are issues that borders on the need for enlightenment programmes such as public relations in libraries and society at large. But because the existing ones are defective in Nigeria, the situation has persisted. The resultant consequence has been devastating not to mention the adverse effects on Nigerian special libraries. Quite so, this is bound to continue as far as Nigeria and her institutions still remain ignorant of special libraries importance and their role in national development. For the status quo to change, conscious and deliberate efforts must be made. The paper therefore is an effort towards this regard as it examines the concepts of special libraries, national development, and defective public relations and establishes a connection between special libraries and national development, and goes on to identifies the causes and consequences of defective public relations on Nigerian special libraries and Nigerian society and the way forward.

Concept of Special Libraries

Special libraries are those group of libraries essentially meant for research in a particular field of study and are patronized by specialists in specific fields (Ode and Omokaro, 2007). According to Uganneya and Agoh(2012), these libraries are established to meet the highly specialized requirements of professional or business groups maintaining that these types of libraries cover a specific, definable, subject field. They further assert that special libraries are largely concerned with communicating information to specialists' users, in response to, or preferably in anticipation of, their needs. They are group into four: research libraries, government department libraries, business and industrial libraries and professional libraries. Hameed (nd) further indicate that they are research libraries that serve the interest of research institutions and people working in an organization with specified subject interest which is usually narrow in scope. At other times, according to Hameed special libraries serve the interest of the public on a narrow discipline. Shidi, Aju and Ashaver (2014) add that they are unique and cater for information needs of their parent bodies such as individuals, institutes, government organizations etc.

Some important special libraries in Nigeria include International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Library,

Ibadan; The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) Library Lagos; Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FUR) Library, Oshodi; National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI) Library, Vom Plateau State; Nigerian Institute of Legal Studies (NIALS) Library, Lagos; Cocoa Research Institute (CRI) Library, Ibadan and Central Medical Library, Yaba-Lagos (Ode and Omokaro, 2007). Quite so, special libraries are information systems established solely to assist people, organizations, and institutions be it governmental or non-governmental, with information in fulfilling their various mandates in society. Unfortunately, these libraries are not recognized for what they stand for, as such, they are undervalued and underutilized by the people they are meant to benefit (Mngutyô and Tarbo, 2020).

Concept of National Development

According to Mngutyô & Ngushin (2018), “national development is the focus of every society”. Afolabi (2009) explains that it is the economic growth, modernization, equitable distribution of income and national resources and social economic transformation for improved living standards of people through the use of a country’s human, natural and institutional resources. In the same vein, Ikpaahindi (2009) aver that it is the transformation of the various (political and socio-economic) aspects of the life of a nation. He further stress that it is a progression from a low undesirable state to a high desirable one or vice-versa. Ahmed (2009) summarized that national development involves all attempts at alleviating poverty and enhancing the quality of life of the average citizen. This includes the ability of the citizens to realize their potentials and live lives of dignity and fulfillment, the correcting of the prevalent socio-political inequalities, oppression and justice which inhibits the effectiveness of the individuals’ innate abilities for the common good of the society. National development therefore is the holistic attempts in all aspects of a nation’s life to reduce poverty to a minimal level, improve the quality of citizens’ lives as well as realize their potentials, let them live lives of dignity, fulfillment, correcting socio-political inequalities, oppression and justice that inhibit the effectiveness of an individual’s innate abilities through the different government agencies, corporations, institutions, associations, individuals etc structures in society.

Concept of Defective Public Relation (PR)

To understand the concept of defective PR, public relation is first explained as the work of explaining to the public what an organization does so that it will be understood and approve of (Longman 2001). According to Israel (2012), public relation is a management tool that is increasingly becoming important in the management of organization such as the library, whether private or public, whether they are profit making or nonprofit oriented an essential element in the communication system that enables individuals to be informed on many aspects of subjects that affects their lives. Israel (2012) add that it is information given to the public, persuasion directed

to modify attitudes and actions and efforts to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its public and of publics with that institution. Also, World Book (2002) states that public relations are activities aimed at increasing communication and understanding between an organization or individual and one or more groups called publics.

In librarianship, Reitz (2005) state that public relation is publicity designed to create favorable public opinion and boost awareness of the benefits of library services, resources and programmes and promote the interest of libraries in society. Shidi and Sambe (2019) explain it as a way of establishing and maintaining or sustaining mutual relationship between the library and its publics. Public relations therefore are the various strategies or activities an organization or an individual employ to be understood and to improve her relations with the public it deals with. Public relation uses basic methods to communicate with the public, namely; advertising, Lobbying, publicity; and press agents.

Relatedly, Israel (2012) admits that the library cannot achieve its aims without ‘good will’ and co-operation of its public. Thus, stating further that library needs public relations in its effort to achieve its aims. Therefore, high quality book stock and personal contact through public relations is a necessary requirement. But where public relations are defective, it invariably means, that the aim of special libraries stands to be adversely affected.

Defective PR suggests fault in public relation rendered. It means public relation that lacks important components that would have made it effective resulting into it being defective. Defective public relation is therefore the ineffective explanation of an organization activity so that it is not understood and approved by the public it serves. It is also the result of improper organization of public relations that result into lack of understanding of organizations’ activities and also the inability of public relations activities to influence the public in the desired manner. Essentially, defective PR is the poorly or badly organized and executed explanation of an organization’s activities that does not influence the public it serves.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Mngutyô & Ngushin (2018), special libraries are the closest libraries to national development because of their direct effect on man’s development. According Ode and Omokaro (2007), special libraries are established directly by institutions, associations, organizations, individuals’ etc to provide specific information for socio-economic and political activities in a nation. They assist researchers or staff of parent institutions with information that results into the production of goods and services. This collectively impact on national development as it tries to alleviate poverty in the land, enhance the quality of life of the average citizen, help citizens to realize their potentials and live lives of dignity and fulfillment, correcting prevalent socio-political inequalities,

oppression and justice which inhibits the effectiveness of the individuals' innate abilities for the common good of the society. Quite so, special libraries are life wire of sustainable national development constantly supplying information for effective and efficient production of goods and services to meet the varying needs of people in society. It is unfortunate that, this symbiotic relationship is yet to be fully realized in Nigerian society and institutions, because of defective public relation hence the undervalue and underfunding of Nigerian special libraries.

III. CAUSES OF DEFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONIN NIGERIAN SPECIAL LIBRARIES

There are factors that are responsible for defective public relations in Nigerian special libraries. Some of the likely factors that could be responsible include unqualified personnel, lack of parent institutions attention, underfunding, wrong assumption by library managers, lack of confidence, and lack of opportunity for library orientation and education and lack of interest.

Unqualified personnel: Most special libraries are headed by library officers who are holders of diploma qualification in library science (Edoka 2000). These officers by their training are not fully prepared and equipped to offer the kind of information services that are expected of them to members of their parent institutions. Because of this, the officers lack the required professional requirements such as knowledge and competency including skills to engage in effective public relations capable of influencing policy in favour of the library.

Lack of confidence: The situation where managers of some special libraries and their team possess low qualification is not good. Because of this, the necessary confidence that comes with higher education and qualifications to enable them to be ready, and properly organized, in order to execute effective public relation activities are lacking, resulting into defective public relations.

Lack of good understanding of the library by library personnel: Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) states that the primary problem of library profession in Nigeria is being misunderstood by the members of the society. This suggests general defective public relations in Nigeria. Quite so, it would appear that even some librarians and library officers in Nigerian libraries including those in special libraries lacks what it takes, that is, full knowledge of special libraries strategic importance in parent institutions to offer effective public relations. Because of this, among other things, there are no deliberate efforts to convey such understanding to parent institutions. What at most have been done it seems, are haphazard explanations that do not convey clear understanding that the library is an active contributor of utilitarian information to the daily activities of parent institutions.

Lack of parent institutions attention: Many Nigerian libraries including special libraries are not the priority of their parent

institutions. This is seen in their inadequate funding (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002) resulting into lack of adequate information materials among other things. Most times they are established as a criterion in these institutions for accreditation purposes. For that reason, they are not accorded attention until when there is accreditation around the corner. Even at that, nothing concrete is done in them for the sake of the accreditations except for cosmetic arrangements where collection and facilities are borrowed from sister libraries for the exercise and are soon returned back after the exercise is over. This posture of "I don't care attitude" towards the library, has led to defective public relation. By this, the libraries are not encouraged to carefully plan and organize any effective public relation knowing that whatever is done does not matter.

Underfunding: Generally, Nigerian libraries are not appreciated (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002) including special libraries. As such, they are not recognized as integral part of their parent institutions hence their funding is not prioritized. Even those that have been recognized, to some extent, still suffer the same fate of inadequate funding. They are, for most times, regarded as adjunct tuck to institutions/organizations to meet criteria for accreditations or as beauty edifice to be shown off in their organizations to visitors.

Wrong assumption by library managers: Some special libraries managers have the wrong assumption that users of special libraries are library literate; that they understand the importance of library to their activities and do not need library education. Generally, Ochogwu (2007) reported that wrong assumption has been responsible for lack of research in libraries on library activities thereby preventing dependable solutions from being proffered to library phenomenon. This has resulted into less effort towards organizing any comprehensive public relation on library activities with the assumption that users' previous knowledge should stand in for them.

No proper opportunity to explain activities: Only a few organizations/institutions have appropriate forum whereby departments such as the library take turns to explain their activities to members of parent institutions. Even with the few that have such opportunities, it is rare to see the library being featured for presentation on such forum. When they are eventually featured, the time allotted is inadequate for justice to be done on explaining the activities of the library to be fully understood.

Lack of opportunity for library orientation and education: Special libraries unlike academic libraries do not have the mandatory opportunity to render library orientation and education to users. Why that is not so, remains aenigma. What they often offer is at the instance of users (Edoka, 2000) which in most cases are rare and far apart. This has therefore prevented library managers from organizing comprehensive public relations where users of special libraries would be given explicit explanations on different aspects of library that would make them to fully understand the library so that it

would enable them use library facilities and resources effectively for better outcome for the advancement of their parent institutions.

Lack of interest: There exist librarians or information officers without interest in librarianship (Mngutyô and Ngushin, 2015). Some do so as a result of the money especially those in academics and some special libraries among others. This group of librarians stands a great deal to do more havoc than good to the profession. To such officers, it does not matter whether the library is perceived and understood in the right perspective or not. Therefore there is no care and conviction when explanations on library activities are given.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF DEFECTIVE PR IN NIGERIAN SPECIAL LIBRARIES

The inability to explain effectively the importance of special libraries, their role and strategic position in parent institutions has resulted into unpalatable consequences in Nigerian special libraries. Some of the likely consequences may include:

Lack of full attention: Edoka (2000) posits that Nigerian special libraries enjoy little attention. This little attention, as it appears, is because they are not understood as they should, due to defective PR given rise to the present lack of full attention.

The libraries are neglected: Parent institutions of Nigerian special libraries like other types of libraries have failed to see the crucial value of information in the solution of complex economic, political and technological problems (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002). And because of that they have been seen to ignore and divert the budget meant for library to other areas. The full financial attention for instance required by Nigerian special libraries to perform at full capacity is therefore lacking hence underfunding given rise to inadequate book stock, facilities, staff, insufficient training and retraining of library staff as well as lack of the state of the art ICT facilities and many other relevant information materials.

Information lack: Dike (2000) asserts that there has been information explosion. Ochogwu (2007), however state those developing countries like Nigeria are in critical information famine or lack. Defective PR, as it is, has denied researchers, individuals, professionals of different sorts from being information literate and to demand for appropriate information services that would enable them from accessing information. Regrettably, these users though abound with information are living in information lack hence low productivity in terms of quality and quantity of goods and services produced and supplied.

Under Funded: The adequacy and appropriateness of information received from special libraries is a product of the financial investment in them. This is a function of the value attached to information. However, in Nigerian special libraries, defective PR has prevented most parent institutions among other things from knowing the value of their libraries,

hence information, to warrant reasonable investment in them. The resultant effect is that special libraries are underfunded.

Poor Information Resources: One cardinal duty of special libraries like other types of libraries is to have evaluable information resources for their clientele. The information resources are expected to be adequate, relevant and up-to-date and should be provided on continuous basis for utilitarian purpose to advance the course of parent institutions. It is unfortunate that because of defective PR in Nigerian special libraries, the importance of these resources are not known and so these libraries have over time becomes canty, inadequate, out -of- date and are not growing as they should but have remain stagnant. This is not to mention the absence of Internet services or epileptic Internet services wherever they are in existence due to lack of renewed subscription.

Poor Patronage of Library Services: Special libraries exist to provide information to her public, the users. The services they offer are dependent on users request and demanding line with users' needs. It is unfortunate that due to defective PR, users of special libraries are unaware of this and so, have not taken the advantage to explore and exploit the resources and services fully.

Undervalued: Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) assert that Nigerian libraries(including special libraries)are undervalued. This is probably because they are not fully understood as a result of defective Public relations hence undervalued.

Low Image: Special libraries play significant role in national development (Mngutyô, Angbande and Gbuushi, 2020). However, because of lack of proper understanding of this by members of Nigerian special libraries, as well as the general public at large, their relevance have not being clearly understood, hence they are relegated to the background.

National Development is Compromised: Special libraries collectively supply information to organizations, institutions, associations; research institutes and so on including individuals for the production of goods and services that impact on national development (Mngutyô and Ngushin, 2018). Regrettably, defective PR in Nigerian special libraries have hindered organizations, institutions, associations, research institutes, individuals and so on from being adequately aware of the value of information in this regard. The resultant consequent is the less attention enjoyed by Nigerian special libraries hence information, leading to national development being compromised in the process.

V. THE WAY FORWARD

Building Image of Library: The hitherto low image of libraries, librarians and librarianship needs upgrading. This can beg in from library schools. The emphasis can be on self-esteem of professionals-to-be, relevance of what they are studying and the benefit to individuals and ultimately the society.

Prospective Librarians must be candidates with real interest: Candidates that study to later become library professionals should be people with interest in librarianship. Anything short of this, have no business to be admitted in library schools. Those who eventually found themselves to read librarianship by chances should be given orientation in order to create interest and passion in them for the profession before carrying on or else should be given passage to other fields of their choice. In addition, trainers who hitherto have been lackadaisical and nonchalant in the affairs of students should be encouraged to change. They should be encouraged to endeavor to create the right atmosphere during training so that candidates would imbibe the right conduct, utterances and behavior as senior colleagues and be instilled with the air of importance, confidence, interest and believe in themselves.

Possession of Higher Qualifications: Possession of higher qualifications such as master's degree and PhD are necessary panacea to defective public relations. This should prepare and give library managers in Nigerian special libraries the boldness and confidence necessary to advocate and lobby at the shortest notice freely at a higher level to influence decisions and policies in favour of the library. These qualifications should be flaunted at any slightest opportunity as a ticket to be heard.

Development of Research and Presentation Skills: Research and communicative skills come with possession of higher qualifications alongside presentation skills at least to a great extent. These skills are highly needed in the way the affairs of library are conducted, users are related with and library issues are addressed. Library managers in special libraries should go for them or alternatively, candidates that possess them can be employed to take over headship of the libraries.

Significant Contribution by library to parent institutions: From the foregoing so far, special libraries no doubt are significant in the affairs of parent institutions. Given whatever resources at their disposal, they should always attempt to be relevant at whatever point in time to parent institutions by supporting her activities with relevant information. This means that, they should be ready to align themselves through provision of appropriate information services as well as reference services that are relevant to the activities of parent institutions. In essence, in whatever project of parent institutions, the libraries should be seen contributing to it success.

Involvement in workshop presentations: Paper presentations are avenues where people are systematically educated on issues affecting people or organizations or communities. The library can encourage the institutionalization of monthly departmental meetings as well as organizational continuing education meetings where departmental members are educated and organizational members with departments taking turns in the organization's meetings. These are opportunities to indulge in PR or involve in workshop presentations. This should enable librarians/library officers to develop research,

communicative and presentation skills. To be involved at the level of organizations library managers should lobby for more slots to present papers frequently both in and outside their organizations. This should be able to sharpen their ability to communicate and present skillfully PR in a systematic, orderly and coordinated manner that would influence things to library's favour.

Opportunity for Orderly Presentation: In institutions where at least the relevance of libraries is known, the librarian is made a member of several committees because he or she is considered as an information officer. Quite so, he or she has the opportunity to contribute significantly during these committee meetings. As a result, this should give him or her, the opportunity to carefully plan and organize PR in a more orderly manner that would ensure that the library is understood by key members of parent institutions.

VI. CONCLUSION

The consequences of defective PR are indeed unpalatable and more damaging on Nigerian special libraries and Nigerian society that can be imagined. Some of the likely causes are unqualified personnel, lack of parent institutions attention, underfunding, wrong assumption by library managers, lack of confidence, and lack of opportunity for library orientation and education and lack of interest. The possible devastating consequences include lack of attention, neglected, underfunded, undervalued, low image, lack of adequate information sources, poor patronage of library services, national development being compromised among others. The way forward among others include building image of library; possession of higher qualifications by library managers, prospective librarians/library managers should be candidates with interest, development of research and presentation skills. Though the task is herculean, it is certainly surmountable and must be addressed starting from now that Nigerian society seeks accelerated development.

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