

Poor Funding of Public Libraries in Nigeria: A Case Study of Niger State Public Library

¹GARBA Ahmed, ²GARBA Jibrin Danladi and ³ZUBAIRU Isah

^{1, 2 & 3} Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru

Corresponding Author: Ahamedgarba@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study investigates the poor funding of the public library in Nigeria with Niger State public library, Minna, as a case study. The objective of the study was to determine the state of funding in the public library, find out the major sources of financing the public library, assess the adequacy of the fund provided to the public library, and examine factors affecting the provision of funds in Niger state library board. The descriptive survey was used with the target population of one director and four professional library staff, the five questionnaires that were administered were returned, representing a 100% return rate in the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentages. The government was identified as the primary source of funding public library, and the result showed that sources of funding of the public library were inadequate. The poor attitude of the government and lack of budget implementation by the state government was the primary factor affecting the public library in Niger state. The study, among other things, recommended that the public libraries should not depend on government in providing funds, and they should explore additional ways such as commercializing some of their services and seeking external support from donor agencies in the development of specific projects.

Keyword: Poor funding, Public library, Niger State and Nigeria

Introduction

The public library is a social institution that is tied to the political and social realities of the communities where it is situated. As the name implies, it is a library that serves the public. The public library managed and run by a state government or a board set up by the state government and is regarded as people's university. It stocks every conceivable material that would add to the knowledge, education, research, information, and cultural needs of the society (Svendsen, 2013). The public library is established to provide materials that communicate experience and ideas from one person to another and are made quickly and freely available to all people.

The public library offers access to knowledge, information, and work of imagination through a range of resources and services. It is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion,

language, disability, employment status, and educational attainment. People in all walks of life use public libraries, resources, facilities, and services. The users of public libraries include pupils, students, teachers, scholars, scientists, business executives, government officials, and even drop out. Large numbers of people also turn to public libraries to satisfy their desire for knowledge or to obtain materials for some kind of leisure-time activities. Svendsen (2013) describes public libraries as meeting places that provide some individual and collective benefits to local communities free of charge. The author further mentioned some of the advantages which a public library provides to include self-education and development, information, social interaction and networking, cultural enrichment, and educational support towards the attainment of the goals of the public library.

Public library funding refers to making money available for the day to day running of the library. Financing here deals with making money or funds available to public libraries. Finance is the life wire of any establishment, including land, labour, capitals, and information. The capital here refers to finance, which can be used to procure other factors of production, thereby making it more critical than others. Funding is the dominant element in every establishment; it is equally the working capital of an establishment.

Public library funding generally means the various ways we drive the expected fund for capital and recurrent expenses. It involves the money available or allocation to the library for running its day to day activities. However, the funding and financial allocations to public libraries have remained weak in decades. Public libraries need adequate resources to run their services, pay and hire personal, provide current information materials, arrange, organise, and monitor both human and materials resources. Nigeria does not appreciate the importance and needs of public libraries and the services it provided, and this problem reflects in the level of funds allocated to it by the government, state government subventions which constitute about 80% of public library funds are grossly inadequate. This inadequacy is based on political continuity and government attitude Odebiyi, (2009). For instance, the Niger state library board building, which was built in December 1991 by the then Military Governor of Niger State Lt. Col, Lawal Gwadabe up till today, the library complex has not been renovated.

Another problem is the lack of budget implementation by the state government. For instance, in August 2016 at the AGM of Nigerian Library Association (Niger State chapter), which held at the College of Education Minna, the then commissioner of information, Jonathan Vatsa at the occasion, mentioned that the public library had been captured in the budget by the state government. He also added that a new Hilux van had been allocated to the director of the state library board. However, up till today, nothing has been done to the public library, it remains as it is.

According to Egbulono (2002), these problems have adversely affected the public library services and its operations. The result of the impending global

economic situation, on the other hand, has drastically affected the attainment or achievement of basic standards in funding the libraries

Historical background of Niger State Public Library Board

The Niger State public library was established in 1976 when the state was created. As at that time, the state library services were a division under the Ministry of Education. The division started her first operation in two offices allotted to her at Bosso village, as a temporary site where the Federal University of Technology Minna is currently operating. After the completion of the state Secretariat along Paiko road in 1977, the state public library was relocated to the secretariat in a block containing three offices. In 1984, the library services department was cut out from the ministry of Education and merged to the ministry of information, Youth, sports, and culture. Between 1976 and 1992, the library services division was moved from one temporary site to another. For example, from Bosso village temporary office to the state secretariat along Paiko road, to a block of school building formerly housing Marafa Primary School along Bosso road and later moved to House of Assembly.

The Niger state government partially completed and commissioned an ultra-modern library complex to house the state library board headquarters in December 1991. The building is situated off the old secretariat road between the state government intermediate civil servants' residential quarters, Minna. In the same year, 1991, an edict establishing library board in Niger state was formally promulgated by his Excellency Lt. Col. Lawan Gwadabe, the then military governor of the state. Board members were also constituted and sworn in by the same governor. The constituted board of the library was, however, dissolved by the civilian administration headed by Dr. Musa Inuwa in 1992. The Niger state government inherited a branch library built by defunct Northern regional government at its inception in 1976. The branch library situated at Bida was established in 1963. The state library board had since established three (3) branches in Suleja, Kontagora, and Rijau. Some of the branch libraries still operate on temporary sites. The buildings housing the libraries are loaned to the board by the respective local government councils. The state library headquarters is now occupying an ultra-modern library complex befitting the status of the state government, which was named after a renowned Islamic Scholar Dr. Abubakar Imam library complex. The library has four main sections. Technical section, a reference section, the serials section, and the administrative section. It provides public library services to the entire people of Niger State. Currently, the library has Six (6) branches located in Agin, Bida, Kontagora, Rijau, Suleja, and the headquarters, which doubles as Minna branch of the board (Adamu, 2009).

Problem Statement

The budget allocation of many public libraries has not been released as and when due. Moreover, this delayed the attainment of the objectives of the library. There is inadequate funding of public libraries by the state government, which

prevented the library from implementing its programmes and also a lack of government commitment towards the public library. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to investigate the factors that lead to poor funding of the public library in Niger state.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the state of funding in the public library in Niger State
2. Find out the primary source of funding in the public library in Niger State
3. Determine the adequacy of the fund provided to the public library in Niger State
4. Examine factors affecting the provision of funds in the Niger State public library.

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of funding for the public library in Niger State?
2. What are the major sources of funding of the public library in Niger State?
3. How adequate are the funds provided to the public library in Niger State?
4. What are the factors affecting the provision of funds in the Niger State public library?

Literature Review

Folorunso (2010), Ajegbomogun (2010), and Arts Council England (2014) agree that internally generated revenue (IGR) plays an essential role in the development of public library services by facilitating access to new digital technologies and sources. IGR has seemingly become customary in public organizations globally, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Where money is short, IGR can be sourced through several ways such as photocopying services, rental of halls, study carrels and offices, the token collected from users' library membership registration, scanning and bindery services, and the organization of seminars and workshops. Another way of increasing income is to solicit funds from wealthy individuals, as in the case of the New York public library, which in 2011 received from a financier \$100 million for the expansion of the library (Yusuf, 2011). This type of gesture is a common practice in developed countries, where community members actively participate in the development of public libraries.

The users of public libraries are heterogeneous, owing to the uniqueness of this type of libraries, serving all categories of people in the community, Unagha (2010), Onoyeyan and Akanwa (2014) point out that public libraries provide unrestricted access to an array of library resources and services free of charge. They add that these libraries have a broader mandate than other types of the library – i.e., to develop their collections to reflect their users' diverse needs.

Public libraries in the country are, no doubt battling to remain relevant and facing multiple challenges. News Agency of Nigeria (NAN, 2017). The survey

across the six geo-political zones had revealed that public library services are going through hard times. Oyeronke (2014) Affirms that financial constraints constituted the major challenge facing the library in the country. He attributed the state's inability to restock the library regularly to the state of the economy, which has just come out of recession and the lackadaisical attitude of the government on the early release of funds to the library.

In the views of Odebiyi (2009), the present crisis in libraries, especially in public libraries, stems from under-funding, which leads to a lack of adequate infrastructures and facilities. This observation has made the learning environment too hostile to learning and action research. It has led to a lack of commitment from staff and users to the public libraries' overall goals and objectives. Major facilities needed in the public library can no longer be adequately provided because sometimes after staff salaries are paid, little or nothing remains for other required facilities.

Arkorful (2010) affirms that libraries in Africa have difficulties in satisfying the information needs of their users because the amount of information is so vast that using the traditional method of retrieving information leaves much to be desired. She noted that at the same time, inadequate funding affects the number of materials the libraries can acquire. The library buildings were no longer able to accommodate the growing population of library users. Lack of capital funding had affected the expansion of the library space to accommodate the increasing population of clients. The computerization of libraries was under threat because of the lack of financial resources from the government to maintain the available equipment.

Ebiwolate (2009) observes that low financial support was a significant factor hindering public library development in Nigeria. He explained further that the primary reasons for this inadequate library funding were the poor state of the economy and low priority given to libraries by the government. As a result, staff and material inputs had significantly been affected due to reduced library funding. Lack of funds also resulted in small collections, cancellation of periodical subscription space problems, cuts in library opening hours, reductions in staff, challenges in the conservation of material, and, more importantly, inadequate services.

Sewell (2010) explains that the public library budget was undergoing stress for a variety of reasons, which include inflation, cutbacks, and new fields of study, and new formats, especially electronic resources. Writing on the depreciation of the national economy, Badu (2010) affirms that the Ghana currency was depreciating daily. According to him, the librarians have to order from overseas the exchange rate changes by the time they put their orders through. This affects orders and payment of British interlibrary loans. The situation is not anything different in Nigeria, where the currency continues to depreciate when compared with other currencies.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. The population of this study was five (5) respondents. This comprises one (1) director and four (4) professional library staff. The study was conducted in Niger State. The study used the only questionnaire as a research instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and percentages.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: State of Funding Public Library board in Niger State

S/N	Statement	Seriously Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Seriously Disagreed	Total
1	The library experience the shortest of the fund to execute the capital project	3(60)	2(40)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100)
2	Underfunding of public library put challenges before director or manager	2(40)	2(40)	1(20)	0(0)	5(100)
3	Allocation to the library is NOT released as at when due	3(60)	1(20)	1(20)	0(0)	5(100)
4	Fund allocation to my library is inadequate	2(40)	3(60)	0(0)	0(100)	5(100)

Table 1 revealed that the public libraries in Niger state are experiencing the shortest of the fund to execute their capital project; 60 % of respondents agreed with the statement. In contrast, 40% of respondents agreed that public libraries are experiencing the shortest of the fund. 40% of responded agreed with a statement that the public library was underfunding by the state government, which put the challenge to the director or head of the library. 60% of respondents agreed that the allocation of funds to the library was not always released on time. This delay makes the library not achieving its stated objective. Lastly, 60% of respondents agreed that all the funds allocated to the library are inadequate, which crippled the performance of the libraries. The study showed that the library is lacking funds to execute the capital project. The lack of funding could be attributed to the fact that the government does not place much importance on the public library.

Furthermore, the government also feels that public libraries are not money generating an institution; therefore, little or no money should be invested in them.

However, this is a wrong notion because public libraries provide information for various categories of the user, which can be transformed into money, thereby contributing significantly to the socio-economic situation of a community. This finding is in line with Achebe (2012), who revealed that the state of Public libraries is weak and thus attributed to the relaxed attitude of those in authority towards effective service delivery.

Table 2: Major Sources of Funding in Public Library Board in Niger State

S/N	Statement	Seriously Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Seriously Disagreed	Total
1	Subvention from state Government is the only source of funds available to the library	4(80)	1(20)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100)
2	Local government provides funds to the library to meet their obligatory	0(0)	0(0)	4(80)	1(20)	5(100)
3	Internal Generated Revenue contributes significantly to the source of funds in the library	0(0)	3(60)	2(40)	0(0)	5(100)
4	Donor Agencies assist in alleviating challenges of funds in the library	1(20)	3(60)	1(20)	0(0)	5(100)
5	Fundraising increase the opportunity for growth and improved library services	1(20)	4(80)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100)

Table 2 shows that 80% of respondents seriously agreed that the state government is the only source of funding in the public library in Niger state, which means that the public library has no source of financing if not state government. Responded with the highest percentage, 80% disagreed with the statement that the local governments provide funds to the public library. Another (60%) of responding agreed that internally generated revenue contributes significantly to the source of funds in public library. 60% of responded agreed that donor agencies rendered assistant to the public library in Niger state. Lastly, 80% of respondents agreed that fundraising increase the opportunity and growth of funding a public library in Niger state. The funding of public libraries by the government could be connected to the

fact that donor agencies and other philanthropists that provide funds feel that investment made in a public library will be a waste. The reason is that users do not visit the library probably because of the poor reading culture of Africans Oyewo, (2015). The study is similar to that of Salman (2015) in a survey of the effect of funding on service delivery in public libraries in Nigeria, which revealed that the significant source of funds for public libraries is government subvention, which constitutes about 80% of public libraries fund. Other means include fundraising through selected library services such as compilation of subject bibliographies, computer training, indexing, and photocopying. Festus (2017) corroborated this in his investigation for fundraising as a source of funding for a public library that fundraising can be a viable source of funding for public libraries if it is well planned and coordinated

Table 3: Extent of Adequacy of Funds Provided to Public Library in Niger State

S/N	Statement	Seriously Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Seriously Disagreed	Total
1	The annual budget provided to the library by the Government is always adequate.	0(0)	0(0)	1(20)	4(80)	5(100)
2	The annual budget implementation to the library is adequate	0(0)	0(0)	1(20)	4(80)	5(100)
3	The annual budget provision to my library by the State Government is always adequate.	0(0)	0(0)	2(40)	3(60)	5(100)
4	The annual budget implementation to my library is adequate	0(0)	0(0)	2(40)	3(60)	5(100)
5	The annual budget provision assisted by the local Government to the library is always adequate.	0(0)	0(0)	1(20)	4(80)	5(100)

Table 3 shows the extent of adequacy of funds provided to the public library in Niger state by the State government. 80% of respondents disagree that the annual budget provision for the library by the state government was always adequate. The state government has not been doing anything to the public library in terms of funding. 60% of respondents also disagree with the statement that annual budget implementation to my library is adequate. Lastly, yearly budget provision assisted

by the local Government to the library is always adequate; the responded seriously disagree with the statement since the local government is not helping the public library. This finding implies that the extent of adequacy of funds provided to the public library in Niger State is meagre because the major stakeholders are not interested in the library to let alone allocating adequate money to the libraries Basil, (2012). It could also be attributed to change in government or political instability and the lousy economy of the country. The finding is similar to Oyewo (2009), who revealed that Public Library funding involves the money available or allocated to the library for running libraries' day to day activities and further stated that the financing and financial allocations to public libraries have remained weak since decades.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Provision of Funds in Public Library Board in Niger State.

S/N	Statement	Seriously Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Seriously Disagreed	Total
1	Non-release of subvention to the public library by the government	3(60)	2(40)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100)
2	Poor attitude of the government toward library development	4(80)	1(20)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100)
3	Increase inflation in the country affect the public library funding	1(20)	2(40)	2(40)	0(0)	5(100)
4	Inability to retire fund earlier released to the library by the Directors of public libraries	0(0)	0(0)	4(80)	1(20)	5(100)

Table 4 shows that 60% of the respondents agreed that the government was not releasing any subvention to the public library in Niger state. Another factor affecting the provision of funds to the public library in Niger state was poor attitude of government toward library development, with 80% of respondents agreed with the statement that the approach of some library staff is affecting library development. Lastly, 80% of respondents disagreed that the inability of the directors or library head to retire fund release to them is not a factor affecting the provision of funds in the public library in Niger state. These findings contradict that of Azubogu (2010), who surveyed the funding of public libraries in Nigeria with Imo State Library Board, Owerri, as the case study. He (Azubogu) identified factors affecting the financing of public libraries to be inadequate management of funds released, insensitivity on the part of government; lack of public-private partnership; and appointment of non-librarians as board members.

Summary of the Findings

1. The study revealed that the public libraries in Niger state are experiencing the shortest of the fund to execute their capital project and programmes which crippled the performance of the library
2. The primary source of funding a public library in Niger is through subvention from State government.
3. The study revealed that the annual budget provided to the public libraries in Niger State by the state government is always inadequate; the annual budget implementation was inadequate
4. Poor attitude of the government toward library development, non-release of subvention to the public library by the government and reduction in government funding, are the problems affecting the provision of funds in the public library in Niger State

Conclusion

Public libraries are libraries that serve the public and are expected to provide services that will satisfy the general public through the provision of relevant services and resources. The case of Niger State public library is one among many public libraries with touching stories in Nigeria, its inability to discharge its social responsibility to the rural dwellers. The information needs of the users are not being met by the public library do to the constrained by lack of funds, shortage of qualified staff, lack of political will, extremely dilapidated facilities, and obsolete resources. There is a need for urgent intervention by the state government to rescue the library from the present state.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government should provide an adequate fund to the public library in Niger State so that it can execute capital projects.
2. Alternative sources of funds should be sought for by the public library in Niger State. The library should embark on library services that could generate money internally for the library, such as photocopy, provision of Internet service, computer training centre's, abstracting services, and the like.
3. State government should ensure that Niger State public library is captured in the annual state budget and the budget should also be adequate
4. Niger State Director of Library should organise awareness programmes that will make the government and other stakeholders understand the importance of the library to the society to curb their non-challant attitude towards library services.

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