

Full Length Research

Repositioning Library and Information Professionals for Good Governance and National Unity

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Abstract

This paper is an exploratory investigation on repositioning library and information professionals for good governance and national unity. This study explores the importance of good governance and national unity and the crucial roles library and information professionals can play in promoting good governance and national unity. Based on the established facts in the discourse, it was recommended that library and information professionals should give the public equitable access to political and any other information using various means of information dissemination in order to ensuring increase in good governance and national unity, library and information professionals should provide information and media literacy skills to members of the public in order to enabling them respond properly to good governance and national unity campaign messages regardless of the media and library and information professionals should create awareness on the need for members of the public to participate in good governance and national unity activities.

Keywords: Library, Information, Information Professionals, Good Governance, National Unity

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INTRODUCTION

According to Unegbu, Opara and Emuchay (2023), information is viewed as answers to questions that begin with such words as who, what, where, when and how many. This indicates that it could be knowledge one gets about someone or something as well as factors or details about a subject. Unegbu, Opara and Emuchay (2023) also sees information as data processed, organized, structured and presented in a given context so as to make it useful. Library and information professionals are experts in the provision of information services in a systematic and defined manner that meet the information needs of users globally. Library and information professionals are held in high esteem in the business and management of information in all spheres of human field. Library and information professionals have grown to be

innovative, creative and developed mastery in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in providing library and information services to the users (Unegbu, Opara and Ubochi, 2023).

Governance is defined by the World Bank (2002) as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. From the World Bank (2002) definition, it is obvious that good governance can be guaranteed on a platform of a plural democratic system and a public service that can work and achieve results. Good governance includes both a broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic. It involves the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. These include,

the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them. Good governance becomes very fundamental and imperative when viewed against the backdrop of massive deterioration of government institutions, pervasive poverty and widespread unemployment, corruption, as well as the near total collapse of moral and ethical standards in the country which saw governance capacity weakened at all levels (Ujomu, 2004). Good governance as a key condiment of national unity has been one of the focal points of scholars. Leke (2010), views good governance as having close link with the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate; committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order, and deliver public services; able to create enabling environment for productive activities, equitable in its conduct. Good governance is a system of government based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and the process; including accountability of the political leadership to the electorates as well as transparency in the aspirations of government. In the Nigerian context, good governance calls for constitutional rule and true federalism.

National unity is an important subject for any country seeking progress and advancement. Any society that wishes to progress and thrive must accept the notion of national unity. Caplan (2019) describes national unity as a political construct that reflects the collective spirit and will of a group of people who agree to be part of the particular geographical area as a unit, for the purpose of governance and action on behalf of all. According to Zamare and Karofi (2015), national unity is a process that produce an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representative or institution guided by respect for the unique traditions and cultural background of ethnicities sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonizing all interest through a form of dialogue and representation and addressing differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instrument of fairness, justice and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities in order to guaranteed stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants decide to remain in the polity. This definition is a wholesome piece of manual which present a clear picture of who, why, how and what is involved in national unity. Echem, Pokubo, and Ejuh (2018) see national unity as crucial to the development of any meaningful nation. For any meaningful society to advance and flourish it must embrace national unity. The idea behind national unity is simply uniformity, oneness not minding differences as a people. In other words, it's unity in diversity Aragbaye, Oyemah and Akande (2023) state

that national unity is the bricks and caprice of any meaningful development a nation could record because it revolves around a society with unity of purpose and togetherness not minding the difference in term of political affiliation, religion, tribe, culture and every other peculiarity that alienated us from one another.

Promoting Good Governance and National Unity

Promoting good governance and national unity are critical component of any thriving society. As we continue to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing global landscape, it becomes increasingly evident that unity is key to our success. At its core,

- Promoting good governance and national unity involve building bridges between diverse communities, fostering open dialogue and collaboration, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. This requires a concerted effort on the part of individuals, organizations, and governments alike.
- Creating opportunities for people to come together and work towards a common cause can promote good governance and national unity as it fosters a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility. Additionally, promoting diversity in all areas of life helps us to build stronger connections with those from different backgrounds while also enriching our own experiences.
- Promoting good governance and national unity is essential for building unity, especially in diverse societies characterized by differences in religion, language, and ethnicity. This simply means recognizing a common identity despite these differences can foster social cohesion and reduce conflicts among different groups within the society.
- Moreover, emphasizing common goals and values also helps individuals develop a sense of belongingness to their nation-state. By creating an overarching narrative through which every citizen sees themselves as integral members of their country's community, it becomes easier for people to identify with one another regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs. In short, emphasizing commonalities over differences allows people from different walks-of-life to see themselves united under a single banner.
- Lastly, fostering good governance and national unity through collective goals is vital in ensuring the well-being of any nation-state. By embracing diversity while simultaneously celebrating core values that unite us all as citizens we stand poised at erasing conflict providing unprecedented peace even amidst turbulent times (Ezeobi, Mbachu and Chukwuji, 2019). Such an approach reinforces democratic principles like equality before the law while upholding respect for individual rights.
- Creating opportunities for people to come together and work towards a common cause can promote

good governance and national unity, as it fosters a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility. This is particularly important in countries like Nigeria, where the lack of unity has been a longstanding issue stemming from colonialism (Zamare and Karofi, 2015).

Creating opportunities for collaboration not only promotes national unity but also sets the foundation for building a more equitable society that benefits everyone equally.

Library and Information Professionals and Promotion of Governance and National Unity

Library and information professionals play a crucial role in promoting good governance and national unity. Library and information professionals promote good governance and national as follows;

- **Library and Information Professionals are expected to maintain a High Level of Ethical Standards.** This is crucial because it ensures that the profession remains reputable and an integral part of good governance and national unity. Upholding ethical standards means acting with integrity, honesty, and transparency in all aspects of work. Maintaining these standards builds public trust, reinforces professional credibility, and helps to sustain a positive image for the profession as a whole. Ethical behavior is essential not only for library and information professionals but also for the overall success of their organizations and the society at large. Therefore, it is vital for library and information professionals recognize the importance of ethics in their daily operations and always strive to follow best practices while adhering to their code of conduct.

- **Disseminating Information on Moral Education:** Teachings on moral values such as honesty and responsibility, and care help to raise morally responsible and self-disciplined citizens. Falade and Falade (2013) argue that Nigeria cannot promote good governance and national unity that could foster expected development and national transformation except the citizens acquire and demonstrate required values and training. It is worthy to assert here that moral education is one of the avenues through which the required values and traits can be inculcated to the citizenry especially in the educational domain. It is pertinent to note that library and information professionals can explore many avenues to disseminate information relating to moral education thereby contributing to national integration and development. They can organize conferences or seminars on national integration for the young people/school children and use it as a platform to teach them the need for developing traits that would foster national integration. Also, the social media platform can be maximally explored by librarians to raise the necessary awareness on national integration and development among the youths and adults.

- **Library and Information Professionals Promote Information Literacy.** The reason for this is that information literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and knowledge, which are essential for individuals to function competently in today's increasingly complex world. Essentially, information literacy refers to the ability to identify when one needs certain information, as well as the ability to locate, evaluate, and utilize that information effectively. By promoting information literacy among citizens of a nation, library and information professionals can contribute significantly towards good governance and national unity. This is because individuals who possess strong information literacy skills are less likely decisions based on accurate and relevant sources of information.

- **Organizing National Integration Discussion For a for Different Groups of the Society.** Library and information professionals can organize good governance and national unity discussion for a for different groups of the Nigerian society. This when successfully implemented could help in sensitizing members of the Nigerian state on the necessity of national integration and its influence on national development. More so for this to be actualized, LIPs can partner with media and other information-related agencies and non-government agencies (NGOs) to give it a wider coverage.

- **Libraries Face Many Competitors, Some of which are Unreliable and Cause Division among Citizens.** It is important for Library and information professionals to provide access to authorized sources of information using ICT to promote good governance and national unity. They must recognize the importance of fostering good governance and national unity by ensuring people have access to reliable sources of information. Library and information professionals must work towards ensuring society seeks verified sources when seeking answers or guidance on pressing issues, providing credible platforms for accessing data and empowering critical thinking skills. Equal access to trustworthy resources should be available regardless of social status or background by eliminating barriers like cost or location hindering diverse groups from easily accessing library services. This builds a cohesive society promoting shared values anchored in authentic knowledge acquisition-a crucial step towards building a country founded upon mutual respect and understanding despite differences leading us towards a better future together.

- **Organizing Seminars, Conferences, Workshop and Lectures.** These events should focus on areas where there is a lack of understanding among the general public that leads to division and discord. It is crucial for Library and information professionals to examine these issues objectively and try to find commonalities among different communities. These seminars, conferences, and lectures will serve as an excellent opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together and share their

experiences, beliefs, traditions, and values. This will enable them to gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives, which will lead to greater empathy and tolerance within society.

Challenges Facing Library and Information Professionals in Promoting Good Governance and National Unity

Some of the constraints to successful contribution to good governance and national unity are according to Benson, Nwaigwe and Okoroafor (2017) include;

- **Library-Centred Training Acquired in Library Schools.** Most librarians by virtue of training acquired see libraries as their only domain of relevance. This misconception may affect the extent library and information professionals will contribute to the national integration and development agenda. The whole world, global society and everywhere human beings exist and has quest for knowledge remains the domain of information professionals. The import of this is that library and information professionals may find it difficult coming out of their professional comfort zones to engage in other activities that are not library-based.
- **Low Level of Partnership Drive among Library and Information Professionals.** Library and information professionals remain one of the professions that has not fully imbibed the culture of partnership. Most organizations especially, business oriented organizations thrive on the platform of partnership. The key force or driver of the entertainment industry today is their ability to partner with allied and non-allied institutions to promote their agenda. The level of partnership drive among library and information professionals is low, and the subject matter of national integration is not for one profession but rather is all embracing. The low level of partnership drive among Library and information professionals may affect the extent to which library and information professionals will contribute significantly to national integration agenda.
- **Low Regard for Librarians and Their Relevance in Contemporary Nigerian Society:** Over the years librarians have been battling with the image recognition in Nigeria. There seems to be low regard for library and information professionals and librarianship as a profession. The image and societal perception may affect the extent library and information professionals can contribute significantly to the national integration and development agenda. Library and information professionals on their own part have a low perception about themselves, rather than seeing themselves as neglected and not valued, library and information professionals should take steps to prove their relevance in the Nigerian society by making their inputs towards national integration and development.
- **Paucity of Fund.** Inadequacy of fund has always been a problem to most issues besetting most development programmes. In the context of this paper, it

is worthy to note that organizing talks, seminars, conferences as platforms for promoting national integration in Nigeria requires adequate funding. Looking at the economic downturn of Nigeria and the cut in pay of most library and information professionals, venturing into programmes that have no monetary returns as *returns on investment* (ROI) may not be realistic and practicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommended as follows;

- Library and information professionals should give the public equitable access to political and any other information using various means of information dissemination in order to ensuring increase in good governance and national unity.
- Library and information professionals should provide information and media literacy skills to members of the public in order to enabling them respond properly to good governance and national unity campaign messages regardless of the media.
- Library and information professionals should create awareness on the need for members of the public to participate in good governance and national unity activities.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that good governance and national unity are essential component for the growth and development of any country. It requires a concerted effort from the library and information professionals who play a vital role in promoting good governance and national unity through their services.

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