


EDUCATION FOR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR MICHAEL OMOLEWA

VOLUME I



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Education for Millennium Development: *Essays in Honour of Professor Michael Omolewa*

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Contents

<i>Prologue</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xxi</i>
<i>From the Table of the Head of Department</i>	<i>xxv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xxvii</i>

Section 1: EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT 1

1. Education for Millennium Development: The Transpersonal Challenge
Professor Boucouvalas, Marcie 3
2. UNESCO and Global Partnership for Education Development
Fagbulu, Iyabo. PhD 14
3. Re-visioning the Vocational Purpose of Secondary Education Curriculum in Nigeria for Millennium Development
Alade, Ibiwumi Abiodun. PhD and Adebajo, O.O. (Miss) 21
4. Special Education in Nigeria: Way Out of Millipede Development for Millennium Educational Goals
Oyundoyin, J.O. PhD and Eni-Olorunda, Tolu. PhD 34
5. Millennium Development Goals: The Place of Education in Nigeria
Akinwumi, Femi Sunday. PhD 44

6.	Millennium Development Goals and the Challenges of National Development in Nigeria <i>Sarumi, Abidoye. PhD</i>	58
7.	A Critique of Formal Educational System As an Instrument for Sustainable Development in Nigeria <i>Ojokbeta, K. O. PhD and Omoregie, C. O.</i>	82
Section 2: ADULT AND LIFELONG EDUCATION		93
8.	Lifelong Learning through Mentoring Process and Its Operational Dimensions in Society <i>Professor Braimoh, Dele</i>	95
9.	Adult Basic Education and the Challenges for the Realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) <i>Haladu, Abba Abubakar. PhD</i>	109
10.	Prison Education and the UN Millennium Development Goals <i>Yakubu, Ibrahim Ladan. PhD</i>	123
11.	Promoting the Commonwealth of Mankind in Developing Countries: The Challenges of Adult Education in Nigeria <i>Olajide, Olumide E. PhD; Okemakinde, Sunday Oyelowo and Okemakinde, Timothy</i>	132
12.	Peace Education: A Harbinger for Conducive Workplace Environment <i>Ajala, E. M. PhD</i>	145
13.	The Impact of Traditional Apprenticeship System on Occupational Skills Acquisition for Self-Employment in the New Millennium: A Survey of Selected Trades in Ibadan City, Nigeria <i>Akanji, Tajudeen A. PhD</i>	162

14.	Recurrent and Continuing Education As Drives for Attaining Education for All in Nigeria <i>Egunyomi, D. A. PhD; Ekom, Okora O. and Dwa, Usang</i>	179
15.	The Role of School Library in Promoting Lifelong Education <i>Kolade, Helen K. and Oloajo, Pius Olatunji</i>	195
16.	Global Knowledge Economy: The Challenges for Industrial Education in Developing Countries <i>Hassan, Moshood Ayinde. PhD</i>	210
17.	Implications of Budgetary Allocation of Adult and Non-formal Education to Lifelong Learning in Nigeria <i>Olojede, A. A. and Dairo, Lateefat O.</i>	226
18.	A Situation Analysis of International Labour Organisation Conventions and the Nigerian Labour Laws <i>Abu, Peter B. PhD and Bankole, Akanji R.</i>	245
19.	Economic Reforms and Human Development in Nigeria <i>Okuwa, Oluwakemi B.</i>	265
	Section 3: ADULT LITERACY	285
20.	Adult Literacy: From Monitoring to Practice <i>Professor Wagner, Daniel A.</i>	287
21.	Comments On Literacy, Poverty and Democracy: Can We Be Illiterate, Poor and Still Be Democratic? <i>Emeritus Professor Akinpelu, J. A.</i>	316

22.	Communicating With Non-Literates <i>Professor Rogers, Alan</i>	324
23.	Building A Learning Society for the Millennium in Nigeria: Challenges and Responsibilities <i>Aderinoye, Rashid. PhD and Laoye, Deola, PhD</i>	351
24.	Towards the Cultivation of a Reading Culture in sub-Saharan Africa: A Nigerian Scenario <i>Okojie, Victoria</i>	370
25.	Achieving Scientific Literacy by the 21st Century, Agenda for Universal Basic Education <i>Ezeliara, Bernadette</i>	394
26.	Promoting Information Literacy and Knowledge Economy in Higher Education: The Nigerian Perspective <i>Professor Atinmo, Morayo and Adedeji, Segun. PhD</i>	408
Section 4: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT		433
27.	Psychological Relevance of Participation in Community Development <i>Adekola, Ganiyu. PhD</i>	435
28.	Adult and Non-formal Education As a Panacea for Transformation of Grassroots Communities in the 21st Century <i>Oyebamiji, M.A. PhD</i>	446
Section 5: EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION		457
29.	The Role of Education in Poverty Eradication <i>Professor Fasokun, Thomas Olusola</i>	459

30.	Education As A Strategy for Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria <i>Campbell, Omolara Ayotunde</i>	476
31.	Empowering the Retirees: A Career Counselling Input <i>Adeyemo, D. A. PhD</i>	495
32.	An Overview of the Effects of Poverty in Nigerian Rural Areas <i>Ebirim, Ugomma</i>	507
33.	Enabling Education for Poverty Eradication in Nigeria <i>Jaiyeoba, Adebola O. (Mrs), PhD and Atanda, Ademola I.</i>	519
34.	Education and Poverty Eradication <i>Lawal, B.O. PhD</i>	538
	<i>Index</i>	551

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY IN PROMOTING LIFELONG EDUCATION

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Introduction

Education, undoubtedly, continues to remain the most outstanding development priority area in Africa (Omolewa, 2003). Perhaps this is the reason why special attention is given to this sector by every succeeding government in Nigeria from independence till date. Development cannot occur where education is absent. Every individual needs to acquire useful knowledge relevant to his function in the society. In addition, values, norms, virtues, attitudes, skills and interest required to function as a subject of development are all germane to human existence. It is the literates in any society that contribute more to the socio-political, economic and technological development of the nation Omolewa (2003).

Teaching-learning activities do not take place in a vacuum. It must be organised in a way that allows attainment of set objectives, evaluation and development. Learning instructions must be dished out with every necessary facility such as suitable learning

environment, books, resource persons/teachers, instructional aids, laboratories, libraries and so on. Since teaching methodologies cannot do the magic alone, there is need for the intervention of the library system, especially in the area of resources selection, acquisition, processing and dissemination of these information resources for meaningful teaching and learning to take place.

Developing information-handling skills is basic to lifelong education. It has been asserted, "the most important knowledge is self-knowledge" (Nisbet and Schuksmith, 1986). This statement, according to Dike (1993), epitomises the ever-increasing attention given to learning, or information-handling skills. The National Information System (NATIS) (1975) summarised that information has become the essential basis for the progress of human actualisation and society. Information increasingly seen to it is a basic human right (Carroll, 1981). Irving (1981) as reported by Dike (1993) observed the importance of learning and information-handling skills thus: "Learning about a subject is less valuable in the long term than learning how to learn about a subject. Knowledge changes and increases but the skills for finding and using information are of lifelong value" (p.155).

The conclusion drawn from this statement is that developing the skills learning, for finding and using information, is therefore, more relevant than trying to impart all the information learners might need for a lifetime. The library comes in the area of information for lifelong education associated with reading, writing, and arithmetic, searching, retrieving, organising, possessing thinking, analysing and presenting (Irving, 1981). Herring (1988) shared a similar view while Obi (1977) and Ogunsheye (1978) have suggested incorporation of such skills and schemes into the appropriate grade level curriculum.

The Current State of Library and Library Education in Nigerian Schools

The school libraries in Nigeria lack basic facilities and resources

such as space, furniture and resources expected of standard school libraries due to poor funding. But some of these primary and secondary school libraries have managed to provide some forms of service to support the instruction in schools. However, Elaturoti (2002) reported that all the 74 secondary schools owned by the Federal Government have libraries with full-time trained librarians possessing Diploma or Bachelor's degree. Presently, few of them have completed their Masters Degree programme. He found out that about 500 state governments' secondary schools and some private secondary schools have libraries run by teacher-librarians. Several thousands of public secondary schools have libraries of varying qualities both in stock and personnel. The private primary schools also have libraries of some kind with teacher-librarians looking after them. Most public primary schools have no libraries for lack of space, fund and staff.

Thus, when these libraries were evaluated based on the recommended standards given by Obi (1977), Ogunshye (1978) and Federal Ministry of Education (1992), none of them could be said to be adequate. These inadequacies manifest in the areas: of accommodation, learning resource collection and staffing. Only Federal Government Colleges and some special/private Secondary Schools have purpose-built separate accommodation for libraries. The most commonly found accommodation in other schools is either a single or double classroom within a bigger complex.

Print materials dominate learning resource collection of school libraries. Non-book materials are limited. The most commonly found audio-visual materials include maps, charts and regalia. The books collection consists mainly of non-fiction. There is no input of the school librarian in selection and acquisition of learning resources. Separate budget for school library is nonexistent, even in Federal Government Secondary Schools and Colleges in Nigeria (Elaturoti, 2002). No teacher-librarian claimed to know what the annual budget for the library is. The collections are, therefore, not balanced due to lack of school librarians' input.

On staffing, the position of school-librarians is not established in some schools and whenever established, they are saddled with additional responsibilities. No motivation of any kind and this resulted to disenchantment making the quality of the school library services provided in Nigerian schools to be low. Interestingly however, the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) is making efforts to coordinate and promote development of libraries in all Nigerian schools. The schools are being encouraged to take membership of the Association to keep abreast of developments in school librarianship and benefit maximally from the series of training programmes of the NSLA. Only a few schools have been able to embrace this idea due to inadequate/lack of fund and/or qualified personnel. The membership strength of the association has appreciated recently but individual and institution members' enrolment is still relatively low and there is lack of financial commitment too. Hence supportive role of Government over the years is hereby appreciated. It is believed that the Federal Government will continue to give school library the necessary attention as the deplorable condition is currently being addressed under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme.

In the Nigerian Education Sector (ESA) analysis research report (2003), the identified users of school libraries are mainly pupils in elementary schools, students in secondary schools, teachers, and some members of the community. The library is used for various reasons - academic and aesthetic reasons. Academic uses include preparation of lesson notes and plans, conduct of research, note-making, setting of examination questions and, preparation/studying for examinations. Aesthetic uses include reading for pleasure and socialising with colleagues. The research study revealed that out of 6,758 students, 56.8 percent use the library on daily bases, 20.5 percent once a week and 4.3 percent use the library once a month. Out of the subject teachers, only 28.3 percent use the library daily, occasionally 18.3 percent, 9.9 percent weekly and 1.0 percent monthly while 21.2 percent do not use the library.

The greater percentage of school library holdings is book. The book collection exists as fiction, non-fiction and reference materials. Other collection includes periodicals and electronics resources. There is not enough cooperation between the teacher and librarians in terms of planning effective library services for the students and every other user. Enough is not done in planning various activities in developing library use skills in these students. Since qualified personnel are not always employed as school librarians, there is a lot of deficiencies in the following areas:

- Guiding students in the library to show them useful resources needed for their assignments.
- Spending the library hours with students in the library to teach library use skills.
- Planning effective teaching and learning processes with the school librarian.
- Giving (the) students book talks to call their attention to specific resources to support academic and extracurricular activities in the library.
- Identifying children with special reading needs/reading disability and arranging for remedial programme.
- Providing current supporting materials (books and non-book media) for teaching and learning.
- Creation of library periods on schools' timetable and opening of school libraries beyond school hours and at weekends, which have been identified as capable of promoting library usage.
- Provision of staff to offer adequate library for users. The recruited personnel are determining the volume of work that goes on in the library.
- Accepting changes occasioned by technology in the areas of library routines.

School Library for Educational Excellence

A school library is a place to study and learn. It is, however, much easier to learn if the students interact with various resources on every subject. The library is rich in information resources in all subjects.

National Policy of Education emphasises the need for school library services for education to be meaningful and complete in section 2 (pre-primary education) and section 3 (primary education). Section 3.14 highlights the general objectives of primary education thus:

- The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
- The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; and
- Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of this capacity, amongst others.

Section 15 stipulates that in pursuance of the above-mentioned objectives and to make it easier to carry out these curricular activities, "government will provide junior libraries for primary school children." p.11. Libraries are already being incorporated into new primary schools being put up as part of the plan for the universal free Primary Education Scheme (section 15.2 i). Section 15.5 and 15.6 also reiterated the importance attached to teaching materials ranging from suitable textbooks to relevant equipment and instructional materials cum skills.

The school library is established to play the following roles:

- Acquisition all forms of print and non-print (including electronic) materials and their accompanying technology;
- Organisation for easy accessibility of both the learner and the teacher to meet their learning and instructional needs;

- Provision of curriculum enrichment materials to encourage individual exploration and skill of inquiry and its provision of materials and facilities for teachers for research and self-directed learning.
- Inculcation into the learners' skills of finding information, stimulation of media keeping the teachers informed about new materials while encouraging acquisition of skills in the use of the media programmes through seminars and workshops on the value.
- Provision of facilities for production of learning resources and class instructional aids of the teachers and learners;
- Storage of materials for use in individual and group study, as well as storing materials and equipment for use by teacher and pupils in the learning room;
- Description of learning resources through classification and indexing of all available resources in the school, whether kept in the library, in other parts of the school or in the community beyond;
- Maintenance of a suitable loan service of materials to allow maximum and most convenient use by all;
- Involvement in inter-library, cooperation with other libraries, resource centre or media and coordination of book borrowing facilities, and
- Coordination of maintenance and repairs of all relevant equipment in the learning centre or school.

The list of roles performed by the school library in education is endless. The question is how relevant are these functions to the lifelong education of an individual? These functions cannot be performed in the absence of adequate library facilities and inculcation of library education programme in students.

School Library and Lifelong Education

Lifelong education refers to a process of teaching, training and

learning or a particular kind of teaching or training lasting or existing all through ones life to improve knowledge and develop skills.

A cursory look at the National Policy on Education (Revised, 2004) revealed, "Lifelong education will be the basic for the nation's educational policy" (section 1, sub-section 7:2) p.6. This suggests that the necessity of lifelong education in a rapidly changing world like ours leads to emphasis on information handling or learning skills. These not only include most of the traditional library skills, but also are readily developed through the library and its resources. If truly education is "the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, 3:E-45) then, it must start from childhood and terminate at death. Education (whether formal, informal or non-formal) links the individual to the larger society or culture.

To teach the three basic areas of the cognitive domain (knowledge or insight), affective domain (attitudes), and psychomotor domain (skills), the library is needed. Other definitions elaborate on lifelong broad-based nature: that is, for instance, mental, aesthetic, physical and moral development (*New Grolier Webster International Dictionary*, 1974:1). For education to be what it purports to mean therefore, the library is expected to function in various capacities to facilitate the development and inculcation of the necessary skills relevant to acquisition of lifelong education. This is now commonly referred to as information literacy skills.

Information literacy can be seen as a set of skills and strategies, which include the abilities to recognise a need for information and to evaluate, it effectively (Amucheazi, 1998). Earlier, the American Library Association provides a more elaborate definition, which says:

Information literacy is a survival skill in the information age. Instead of drowning in the abundance of information that floods their lives, information literate people know how to find, or to make a decision...whether the information they select comes from a computer, a book, a government agency, a film or any number of possible sources.

It can be deduced from the above that, information literacy is a progressive and cumulative process, which should start from early life. McCrank (1991) says it implies infirmity skills such as study and learning skills and should be part of subject teaching at all levels-primary, secondary and tertiary. In fact, pre-primary is also included.

Learners in lifelong learning can no longer be seen as robotic information processors where information is poured into them like empty vessels. This is in line with Todd's (1992) submission. Education is no longer teacher/content based but learners' processes focused. Likewise, the library has moved away from its traditional role of being a storehouse of information to a learning-support resource based where all learners are active participants in providing resources for their own learning.

Some of the skills germane to lifelong education include information literacy skills, study skills, and information communication technology skills. The Nigerian government sees literacy as a basic tool in national development. In fact, before one is seen as a "literate person," such an individual must have completed nine years of regular education that is up to the Junior Secondary School Level. The much-cherished Primary Six School Leaving Certificate is no longer fashionable or awarded by the Nigerian Education Sector under the 9-3-4 system. The circumstance of modern life, however, demands the development of good reading habit for the implementation of national goals and on the individual level; lifelong education facilitates fullest and most beneficial participation in the society. It allows us to understand our world and ourselves. It also guarantees academic success, effective citizenship and a fuller life.

Importance of Information Literacy Skills

The teachers' duty is to impart knowledge to his students through teaching. Aside this, the students need be armed with certain skills for continuous learning after leaving school. Information literacy skills are the skills acquired for finding, evaluating and using

information effectively for problem solving or for making certain decisions. This information may be obtained from print and non-print media. A learner should be taught these skills right from primary level of education. Appropriate usage of these skills by information literate person is continuous after such a person might have left school when he may not have the opportunity or assistance from a teacher in a classroom setting. These skills when acquired are applied to any learning assignment. Information literacy is very crucial to learning and as such, the teachers, school librarians or teacher librarians have the responsibility to ensure that pupils master the required library and study skills. These skills enable a learner to fish out information independently, and to possess the skills to locate and use resources in an organised library system. With these skills, studying and mastery of every subject at all levels of education will be enhanced (McCrook, 1991).

The school library is to promote lifelong education. In essence, these library skills should be taught in the school by the school librarian to enable the learner to learn without being spoon-fed. It is essential for students to learn how to use their library with confidence when they need information for their studies. At the primary level, the librarian is to ensure that children know as much as possible about the library. The roots of education are put down at a young age and the same is true for library skills (Baird and Nicola, 1994). If students are shown how a library works in school then, they will continue to use libraries after they leave school.

Such students would also render assistance to people in the use of libraries not only for information finding but also to read for pleasure, self-development and acquire experience. The students should not see the library as another classroom but a place where they can be free to use resources on any subject for it belongs to all the students in the school. The following are the library skills for students:

- Introduction to proper way to handle library resources – both books and non-books – with clean, dry hands and how to turn pages of books.

- Provision of information about types and usage skills of resources housed in the library such as reference books, which are encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories and identification of bibliographic information. The features of subject books should be introduced to the students to appreciate the usefulness of these special features such as content page, glossary, appendix and index. Journal and Magazines should be explained to them as carriers of current information on particular fields.
- How the library works, especially its different sections – fiction, information book sections, the difference between the sections, and the arrangement of the resources and how to locate them. This is through the introduction of top to bottom shelf guides. At the fiction section, students are taught arrangement of books alphabetically by authors' surnames. Subject numbers (classification numbers) are used to arrange books on the information book section. Here, books on the same subject are shelved together and books on related subjects are shelved close to one another. The reference section has books that are consulted for definite pieces of information and provide quick answers and background information on a subject.
- Competence in the use of the library resources. The teacher should give assignments and projects that require the use of the resources which students must be allowed to search for and locate by them. The school librarian should let students find out the usefulness of content page and index by using them to locate particular topics discussed in the book. Students need be guided through appropriate use of information books to come up with the main ideas on the book.
- Locating information necessary for promoting lifelong learning, especially in the area of numeric, manipulative, communicative and social life skills in accordance with the aims of the new education policy is required. Skills required by learners in searching for facts independently from appropriate learning

aids and using these materials to solve day-to-day problems – academic and life in general.

- Locating appropriate sources of information; selecting and recording relevant information from source; understanding and appreciating information from several sources; being able to combine and organise information effectively for best application; and presenting the information learned in an appropriate way.

Conclusion

For lifelong education, the role of the school library is very crucial. It provides the rudiments to learning. It gives information that can change people's lives to a better one. In addition, it encourages students to study, learn and achieve better results as well as provide confidence to look for information on their own at different levels. Acquisition of information literacy skills provided in the school library is very important in this information age throughout the lifespan of an individual. It can be concluded that library and education are two vital institutions of socialisation and perpetuation of human race. The two cannot be separated in an all-round development of a learner. The provision of library services is therefore crucial and in fact, indispensable to any form of education whether elementary, secondary, tertiary or lifelong learning. The earlier a learner acquires a library and information skills the better for the rest of his life.

It is, however, pertinent that solutions should be found to problems facing school libraries on Nigeria, if lifelong learning is the ultimate of school library services. Since the National Policy on Education has highlighted the establishment of libraries in all schools, government should honour the policy in the following ways:

- Establishment of school library should be one of the basic requirements for establishment of schools.
- Regular supply of current books, periodicals and other learning resources to school libraries.

- Provision of school libraries with useful information communication technologies.
- Funds should always be provided for effective administration of school libraries.
- Recruitment of qualified personnel to administer the library.
- Training of personnel to take up new challenges, especially in the area of information technology.
- Libraries should be located in an environment that facilitates learning.
- Flexible working/opening hours should be operated in school libraries.
- Librarians should be seen as academic members of the school and should be relied upon by teachers for the supply of needed teaching and learning resource materials.
- Library hour(s) should reflect on every school timetable and students should be encouraged to use the school library.

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