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# Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Public Library Development: The Experience of Simeon Adebayo Public Library, Nigeria

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*The paper identifies that the only functional public library in Ogun was not getting the desired support from corporate entities; it also identifies many areas where corporate entities can assist the public library especially through the provision of books, computers, cash, standby generators, etc. The major finding deduced from the study is that the public library is not engaging enough marketing strategies to sell her services and make for visibility in the community. The paper recommends that the public library should reach out to corporate entities by marketing its products and services. The paper concludes that corporate entities should assist in development of libraries since Public libraries are necessary for the benefit of the common man who cannot afford to purchase costly books.*

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Public libraries, Corporate entities, Africa, Nigeria.

## 0 INTRODUCTION

Libraries play a vital role in social and economic development of any country. The public library offers guidance and training in information search and quality rating of information sources. Thus, public libraries are necessary if not sufficient prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society. They are unique social organizations dedicated to providing for the broadest range of information and ideas to the public, regardless of age, religion, physical, mental health, social status, race, gender or language (IFLA 2001).

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Sager (1989) has noted that a public library can go only as far as its budget allows. This is particularly so in a country where financial support for the library outside government is hard to come but it may be pertinent at this juncture to note that public libraries in some other parts of the world are facing financial crises too. Funding of public libraries in Nigeria is the responsibility of states and local government councils. All the states of the Federation provide public library services to their inhabitants.

Considering the role of corporate entities in education in Nigeria, Amaeshi et al., (2000) in their study identified that education ranked number 1 when they surveyed seven banks and their roles in CSR. In another similar study by Amaeshi et al., (2006) it was revealed that in 2006, 25 Banks spent the sum of \$24,021,669.03 (twenty four million and twenty one thousand, six hundred and sixty nine dollars) on 20 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects; with education still ranking number one.

Looking at the role of CSR in education, one can see that assisting public libraries is usually not on the list of investors/Corporate entities. The list for CSR projects for education looks somewhat like this:

- a) Rehabilitation of schools
- b) Building of hostels
- c) Adult literacy programmes.
- d) Entrepreneurial and job skills training
- e) Financial literacy
- f) Provision/construction of Information and Communication Technology Centers
- g) Training of teachers
- h) Training of students
- i) Scholarships, etc.

The question to ask is that why the library is usually ignored as after all 'education' and 'library' is two inseparable indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. Public library which is very often called a "peoples' university", is a democratic institution operated for the people by the people that conserves and organizes human knowledge. It is a university of the people since it is maintained and financed by the people of the community who freely throng in this institution and acquire knowledge that they need in their day-to-day life (Molz, 1979).

## **1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NIGERIA: CONCEPT AND HISTORY**

Helg (2007) defines CSR as the set of standards to which a company subscribes in order to make its impact on the society. CSR can be defined as the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2003).

Another ideal definition of CSR has been given by World Business Council For Sustained Development (WBCSD) which says, “Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large” (WBCSD, 1999).

Chandler (2001) argued that “while there is no universal definition for CSR, it generally refers to transparent business practices that are based on ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities and the Environment. Thus, beyond making profits, companies are responsible for the totality of their impact on people and the planet.”

CSR has been debated as long as corporations have existed. For centuries legal, political, social, and economic commentators have debated corporate social responsibility ad *nauseam*. The debate has been on whether a corporation is oriented towards profit maximization or contributing to the general welfare of the society

While CSR as a concept in the West was developed as early as in the 1950’s the concept of CSR is a relatively new phenomena in Nigeria. Contrary to the West, the main influencing factors driving the CSR agenda in Nigeria have been foreign multinational companies operating in Nigeria (Helg, 2007).

The history of formalized CSR in Nigeria can be traced back to the CSR practices in the oil and gas multinationals. The CSR activities in this sector are mainly focused on remedying the effects of their extraction activities on the local communities. The companies provide pipe-borne waters, hospitals and schools (Amaeshi, etal, 2006).

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Library funding crisis is real and has been described by Holt (2005) as both a national and international phenomena. Today, most public libraries in Africa are in a pathetic state, Aina (2004) and Nwosu (2006) identified some of the problems facing the public library in Nigeria to include funding, philanthropy, laws and legislation, recognition/respect for the profession, patronage, hospitality towards the library.

Citing the increased inability of public libraries in Nigeria to enable users do what they want and need to do in the way that most benefits their productivity, pleasure and excellence, Yusuf (2010) draws attention to the lukewarm attitude of government and the lack of innovation at management cadre to reposition public libraries.

In a similar study, Ajibero (2000) likewise agreed that inadequate funding is hindering the development of public libraries in Nigeria and he also attributed this to economic conditions, government attitude, and information infrastructure. Akporhonor (2005), referring specifically to Nigeria, bluntly states that considering alternative funding is imperative rather than elective.

Trying to proffer solutions, Okiy, (2005) suggests that there is need for libraries to look for alternative sources of income in order to meet the increasingly sophisticated demand of library users for information services rather than waiting only on the government for funding.

Both policymakers and the public believe that corporate entities have a moral responsibility towards the society. The Nigerian government has through its National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) set the context by defining the private sector role stating that “the private sector will be expected to become more proactive in creating productive jobs, enhancing productivity, and improving the quality of life. It is also expected to be socially responsible, by investing in the corporate and social development of Nigeria...” (Nigerian National Planning Commission, 2004.)

Recently, the Commissioner for Commerce and Industry Ogun State: Otunba Bimbo Ashiru, urged investors to improve their corporate social responsibilities to their host communities. He reiterated the need for them to always identify and consult with stakeholders before embarking on projects. According to him, “corporate social responsibility is quite different from philanthropy or gift, but must have direct impact on the people” (Fem, 2011).

The Society for the Promotion of Public Libraries has made a fervent appeal to the public sector to spend a substantial portion of their CSR scheme funds for improving public libraries. Talking to media persons, the society president P.S.N Murthy suggested that companies could spend two per cent of their profits under CSR. He observed that education was one of the important areas covered under the CSR and whatever is spent on the improvement of public libraries should come under the category. But unfortunately, there was little awareness and support for the aspect he lamented. (Murthy, 2011).

Opara (2006) averred that the poor recognition and support for the public library stems from poor or wrong perception of the role of the library. According to him, this translates to negative or poor attitudes to it. Saravanan (2010) opines

that public libraries should strive to establish stronger relationships with key stakeholders, including local schools, community groups and corporate entities.

The Local Library Development Division Kansas State Library (2002) in a similar study advised that Librarians and trustees in libraries of all sizes will have to take major responsibility for changing the outdated perceptions of public libraries and winning support. According to them, marketing and public relations are among the biggest unsolved problems of the library profession.

Marketing approaches have proven effective in assisting the Library adjust to changes in its customer base and have ensured that services delivered continue to fit needs. The success of any library is dependent upon numerous factors, among these are getting users to use the library and making them aware of the library's services. Making the library indispensable has been called the secret to library marketing (Block, 2001).

Marketing positions the library in the minds of the community as a "go-to" source for information and helps users understand what the library has to offer them. Marketing builds good customer relations, and contributes to a positive relationship with media, businesses, local government agencies, and organizations. Often marketing is about changing perceptions 'ours and theirs'. Some marketing strategies that public libraries could take advantage of include: Public relations, advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, Internet public service spots on TV, local radio station, monthly book review column in your local paper or in a blog, visual displays, press releases, comprehensive media campaign, podcasts, etc.( Ohio Library Council, 2008).

### **3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In the light of the aim of the study and the review of the literature, the following objectives have been set to:

- a) identify the contributions of Corporate entities to the development of the public library through corporate social responsibility endeavors;
- b) determine what corporate entities should be doing in areas of corporate social responsibility to boost public library operations;
- c) examine the way public libraries market their services, and
- d) make recommendations on the way forward based on the findings of the study.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive method of research was adopted for the study. Primary and Secondary data were collected from both published and unpublished statistical

records kept for six years (2004- 2010) by Simeon Adebo Public library. The data were collected and presented using tables. Literature review of related studies was also carried out in order to provide theoretical framework for the study.

## 5 PROFILE OF SIMEON ADEBO PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Ogun state public library is called the Simeon Adebo Library. It was commissioned on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1990; it is situated at Abeokuta, the Capital of Ogun State. It is the only functional public library in Ogun state. The State has produced so many leaders and successful business men the likes of Obafemi Awolowo, Professor Wole Soyinka, Akintola Williams, Ransome Kutis, MKO Abiola et al. Ogun State has the third largest concentration of industries in Nigeria, it has full representation of banks in Nigeria. The State has the highest number of registered universities in Nigeria. The 1991 census recorded a total population of 2,338,570 residents (Wikipedia, 2011).

## 6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 61 REGISTERED USERS

**Table 1: Analysis of registered users**

Year	Male	Female	Total
2004	723	747	1470
2005	1136	1028	2164
2006	1149	1184	2333
2007	1237	1170	2407
2008	1301	1227	2528
2009	1398	1157	2555
2010	2050	1200	3250
<b>Total</b>	<b>5546</b>	<b>5356</b>	<b>16707</b>

Table 1 is in line with the findings of Simisaye (2009). It reveals that between 2004 and 2010, about 16,707 people were registered as library users. The statistics shows that the public library is in use by the community. Although, considering the fact that this is the only functional public library in the state, it would have been expected to have more users than that recorded.

62 TYPE OF SUPPORT(S) RECEIVED BY THE LIBRARY

**Table 2: Type of support(s) received by the library apart from the governmental support**

Type of support(s)	Individuals	Corporate entities
Donation of books and journals	x	√
Donations of brand new computer	x	x
Donation of used computers	x	x
Donation of cash	x	x
Undertake repairs of parts of building	x	x
Donation of shelves	x	x
Donation of Air-conditioners/ Fans	x	x
Databases	x	x
Internet connectivity	x	x
Scanners	x	x
Stationeries	x	x
Standby generator	x	x

Table 2 clearly reveals that the library has received donations of books and journals but has not been receiving any of the other items as indicated on the Table 2.

63 ACQUISITION OF LIBRARY BOOKS

**Table 3 Acquisition of library books 2004-2010**

Sources	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Purchase	-	250	300	-	500	800	850	2700
Exchange	-	-	-	-	-			-
Gift/ Donation	-	-	40,480	-	6700	1000	9000	57180
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>40780</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7200</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>9850</b>	<b>59880</b>

Table 3 indicates that the volume of books purchased and it is clear that the library is poorly funded by the government as depicted severally by literature. Gifts and donations which constitute the major source of acquisition is also not very encouraging, between 2004 to 2010, the library acquired books from two sources; the findings of this table is corroborated by the study of Simisaye, (2009).

## 64 LIBRARY EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

**Table 4: To ascertain whether the library has adequate equipment, facilities and resources**

Item	Adequate	Inadequate
Catalogue		
Cabinet	√	
Reading Tables	√	
Reading Chairs	√	
Book Trolleys		√
Audio- books		√
Display Racks		√
Cupboards	√	
Computers		√
Projectors Videos		√
Television		√
Tape Recorders		√
Books		√
Journals (electronic & print)		√
Internet connectivity		√
database		√

Table 4 above shows the response of the public library surveyed when asked to indicate on the whether they have adequate equipment and facilities and resources. The response shows clearly that that they have adequate shelves, catalogue cabinets, cupboards, reading tables and reading chairs but several other items like computers, Internet, Audio-books, Journals, books etc. which are of much more value and importance were marked inadequate.

## 65 TYPE OF MARKETING STRATEGY ENGAGED AND ITS SERVICES

**Table 5: Type of marketing strategy engaged and its services**

Type of marketing strategy engaged	obtainable	Not obtainable
Library week	√	
Reading campaign		√
Social networks		√
Use of flyers and posters		√

Radio/ TV jingles		√
Newspaper advertisement		√
Book week		√
Book fair	√	
Readers week		√
Press releases		√
Comprehensive media campaign		√

Table 5 revealed that the library organizes library week and book fairs as a means of marketing its services. Nevertheless, we can deduce that the public library is not engaging enough marketing strategies to sell her services and strive for visibility in the community.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The Ogun State Public library management must be proactive and take advantage of all the corporate entities in the state and make the library visible. All these industries participate in one form of CSR or another, why not in the library. The library board should concentrate on marketing her services and blowing its trumpet, announcing any support received from these corporate entities. The government should ensure that corporate entities contribute one way or another to the development of public libraries by constantly insisting on CSR.

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