

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

Proceedings of
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2016

Theme:

Education as a Panacea for Rapid Global Economic Recovery in Africa

September, 2016

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The Contribution of Africana Collections for Rapid Educational and Global Economic Recovery in Africa: A Librarian Perspective

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Abstract
Africana collections play significant roles in the visibility of Africa and Africans literary works, culture, technology and education. This sense of identity has been emphasized by Africans and non-Africans. The paper examines the contributions Africana collections can make toemancipate it from the claws thwartingeducation and rapid global economic recovery. The support for Africa to build and sustain her collections is emphasized thematically in the paper to show the immeasurable benefits that is guidable and attainable by indigenous knowledge. The paper points to the uncertaintiesthat the adoption of foreign resources cause and could be blamed for reparations of Africa's new ways of life. The library through Africana can bridge the gaps through of dearth information and provide resources needed for decision making through the collections and dissemination of these resources especially those with peculiar and eventful local contents (issues) concerning Africa by Africans and for Africa.

Introduction
Looking at several initiatives taken by Africanists to bridge the divide of education and economy to redress the backwardness of Africa and be at par with the developed nations none is far reaching as equipping the libraries with Africana collections. Africana resources are essential information sources that include written and oral information by Africans or non-Africans about Africa. It has its origin from the rich indigenous knowledge of the Africans handed down orally from generation to generation (Okore *et al.*, 2009). According to Udensi and Dike (2010), this knowledge cuts across various subject areas like agriculture (food items, crops, food preparation, plants, farming, animal behavior, food preservation, etc), traditional medicine (bone setting, use of natural herbs for different ailments, etc and also include subject areas of cultural anthropology, folklore, history, literature, religion, politics, psychology, sociology, traditional medicine of Africa.

The call to harness and document Africa's information resources cannot be over emphasized considering its rich spoken and written cultural heritages, which were unfortunately not capture and/or found on the development agenda of Africa's colonial masters. These evidences and pointer to heritages have distinctively approach the concept of life, culture, medicine, commerce, education, tradition, architecture, governance and agriculture; the contemporary concern of today's world.

According to Fyfe (1976), before 1950 not much was documented on Africa's rich culture because publications on Africa were controlled and directed from outside, these negatively caused the stereotyping of Africa's culture, economy and education which inevitably is the main source of Africana resources. These setbacks are trace to be part of the domineering challenges of Africa and their quest for rapid education and global economic recovery.

Africana has been able to change the ill notions about Africa with facts about its potentials and economic viability, sustainability, human and natural resources. It goes beyond. novelty, social anthropology and as an object that has just emerge upon the world order as supposedly portrayed by most and major interest of European writers. For the purpose of this paper, the following sub-titles that comprise, Africana collections, the role of Africana in Africa documentation, Contributory Roles of Africana Collection in Ameliorating Africa's Communication Gap, The Role of African Libraries in the Support, Growth and Dispersion of Africana for Rapid Education and Economic Recovery in Africa, Harnessing and Documenting Africa's Rich Heritages, Effectiveness and Implications of Africana to Resuscitating Africa's Education and Economy,and Effectiveness and Implications of Africana to Resuscitating Africa's Education and Economy will be discussed cohesively while at the same time forming the basis of the paper thrust.

Africana Collections

Africana collection comprises books, theses, monographs, journals, maps, almanacs, charts, pictures, subject files, CD-ROM, video recordings, internet information resources, slides, micro forms, newspapers, magazines and government reports on the explosive political happenings.

The Role of Africana in Africa Documentation

There are various concepts of Africana by writers and organizations. Some organizations see it from the point of view of the African indigenous knowledge (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)). Indigenous knowledge is defined by UNESCO as the local knowledge unique to a given society or culture over generations. However, Amoda (1978) conceived Africana from a cultural perspective and have defined culture as common history, language, religion, custom, geography, literature, music and visual arts.

Africana is aimed at:

(i) Revive, reconstruct and project African cultures and personality in the world history from pre-historic times to the present;

(ii) Search into and teach all aspects of African life by collection and assembling from eminent world libraries, museums and archives were available oral and documentary evidences on African ethno-history.

Unfortunately, however, earlier Africa collection and research were predominated by the struggle of renewed African writers through individual efforts and based exclusively on literatures and folk tales.

Africana has been able to lay the foundation of integration of the diversified cultural settings into the information society and economy. Today, Africana is decentralized from continent, country and states unto minute settlements aimed at harnessing the trios of socio-cultural, economics and education of the people pivoting them and resolving the gaps about Africa and Africans for present and future generations.

Contributory Roles of Africana Collection in Ameliorating Africa's Communication Gap

The available information about Africa was those relied on print resources and correspondence to schools, institutions and universities affiliated with their western counterparts. These constituted a major setback and widen Africa's communication gap eventually under-developing Africa's education and economic prowess. Africana in the era of information technology however has been able to expand and cut across different resource formats.

Leveraging from the aforementioned, Okore *et al.* (2009) reiterated the need for Africans to face the responsibility of building up their continent by harnessing, developing and documenting their resources because the few Africana resources in circulation show that Africans have not much interest on the development of their resources. Etounga-Manguelle (1998) dispelled by this, warned that Africa will lose her unique cultural features through the intrusion of alien culture/modern uses and behaviours alien to her values. Thereafter cautioned that if Africana is not developed, utilized and preserved for decision making, a time shall come that confusion and rancor may be the order of the day.

The Role of African Libraries in the Support, Growth and Dispersion of Africana for Rapid Education and Economic Recovery in Africa

Library as the custodians of information and knowledge has a great role to play especially those in Africa. African librarians must therefore make substantive effort to see that the various formats of Africana resources are harnessed and made available in the library and hosted on the web to increase visibility and contribute to knowledge.

Librarians should encourage publishers to focus on African materials by acquiring from them the collection. Publishers on the other hand could specialized on Africana collections and encourage corresponding vendors for Africana. Accordingly, Raseroka (2006) supported libraries who include Africana collections as part of their collection development policy. Because Africana are unique collections, Fage (1987) reported that Africana resources originate and were developed through oral tradition, written documents, archaeology, anthropology, serology, astrology and culture. Particular about the written documents published reported that they exist in any of the numerous European languages and as Arabic documents in forms of newspaper reports, magazines and books.

The poor and low development rate of Africana is not without reasons. Mensah (2004) said over reliance on European literature is a major reasons which are predated to colonial years. The educational institutions and systems in Africa did not emphasize the African culture.

Africa cannot afford not to preserve these resources that describe and virtually personify the African man, his culture, economy, education, belief and traditions for the use of present and for future generations to come. It is a task that must be done.

Effectiveness and Implications of Africana to Resuscitating Africa's Education and Economy

The predicaments of Africa can be attributable to the dearth of information cause by lack of use of resources concerning Africa from Africana. Instead, consultation that is usually very expensive is done from foreign resources which aptly contain the history, economy, potentials and culture of the African people as they want it to be. The easefulness of such reportcurrently hunt Africa as is values are fast eroding because its youth and the future generations will not find documents to read about their culture and heritages, prone to plunging into chaos and doom. The influenced by foreign culture has not done any good to our educational systems and economic wherewith out. There is no doubt that all hands must be on deck to salvage Africa and Africans from educational, economic and heritage extinctions.

Conclusion

Harnessing and documenting Africa's rich information resources is possible and sustainable for Africa's rapid educational and global economic recovery. It is capable of facilitating the carrying

out of value research that can develop Africans from within because Africana resources contain various indigenous knowledge of the culture of the African continent and therefore requiring concerted efforts to maintain and should be the starting point to reconcile Africa's challenges confronting its education and economic growth.

Recommendations

Considering the dare need to salvage Africa's from the challenges affecting its educational and economic sectors and the contributions which African collects provide to resolve them, the following recommendations are made:

a. Africana collections hold substantial amount of information, therefore requiring that institutions like the libraries spread across Africa should prioritize these collections and make them visible.
b. Knowledge of what is obtainable about Africana is needed; instituting a form of survey to collect such information is imperative in order to proffer solutions to education and for the rapid economy emancipation of Africa now illusive.
c. All libraries operating any form of Africana collection unit are to collaborate to have a joint repository that can support the transfer of information rapidly.
d. Support for training, preservation, documentation and information gathering relating to Africana collections is needed.

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