Effects of Political and Socio-economic Dynamics on Library Development and Utilization in Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper presents qualitative analyses of case study discussions on the importance of libraries and the effect of political and social-economic dynamics on libraries in Nigeria with particular reference to public, national and academic libraries. It traces historical antecedents of selected libraries with a view of buttressing the point of libraries' relevance from the ancient times to the modern information society. The article adopted an exploratory research design. Secondary data were obtained using a desk review of existing literature on state of Nigerian public, national and academic libraries. Theoretical framework based on library social responsibility and the role of government in the provision of library and information needs of the people is employed and discussed. They include planning process and critical discourse and informational justice (as part of social justice). Challenges facing libraries in Nigeria are identified to include adverse policies, paucity of funds and general government apathy to library development. As a panacea to the identified challenges confronting most Nigerian libraries, the paper recommends that librarians should continue to play their advocacy roles for their libraries, by continual soliciting for increased percentage of funds through budgetary allocation of both the federal and state governments. Also, good reading habit should be inculcated among pupils and students in order to increase the number of library patronage which would in turn encourage support for library development by the stakeholders.

Keywords: Library relevance, Government policy, Library funding, Socio-economic effects, Political influence

Introduction

Despite the laudable goals and objectives of public, national and the academic libraries in Nigeria in providing resources and services to their community of users, these libraries have, over the years, been confronted with challenges that have had adverse effect on the service delivery in particular and on the educational system in general. Sometimes they experience arbitrary cut backs on funding by the relevant bodies, unfavourable fiscal policies and outright clamping down on libraries by the political class, among others. From the ancient time till date libraries have remained veritable venues for research in all branches of learning. They are the forefront of institutions that promote scholarship as access to most modern libraries' resources is free with minimum donation by users often as a token chargeable during the users' membership registration. The government is the owner of public state and federal academic institutions in Nigeria. The federal government owns and finances federal universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC) while the state government owns and finances state polytechnics and universities. In Nigeria, government has continued to be financier of education. Government can therefore influence the improvement of higher education by ensuring that relevant funding policy is established for proper funding of tertiary institutions in country including their libraries. Government must ensure that relevant libraries (public and academic) are established and are constantly updated with current library resources in line with market demands. This study is based on contemporary literature on effect of political and socio-economic dynamics on library development and utility in Nigeria.

The place of libraries in human affairs cannot be overemphasized. The roles the library play which foster societal development are enormous. Unfortunately, the library and its potentials in the current knowledge economy has continued being undermined by stakeholders including the government, and some wealthy individuals who are expected to support and / or encourage library development and utilization both in the public domain and in the academia. Nwokocha (2017) opines that the affairs of humanity are inextricably linked with the activities of the library. There are probably very few other social institutions that wield the kind of influence the library has on the affairs of human beings. The library began as n institution for kings, the royalty, the wealthy and the top clergy. It was so valued that it was not to be place at the disposal of the "less privileged" or the masses. Two reasons accounted for this: (i) Libraries were expensive to set up

and therefore only the well to do could afford it. (ii) Being expensive it could not be left in the hands of those who lack what it takes to appreciate it.

No library can exist and carry out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal. Fund provides the base for all academic library services and activities. Adequate funding is non-negotiable in maintaining higher quality library services. One reason for this is that acquisition of library equipment, facilities and provision of information resources whether in print, non-print or electronic format is subject to availability of fund. Funding, therefore remains the central and crucial factor around which every other aspect of the academic library activities revolves.

It appears that the printed word and the provision of information to the clientele are presently at cross roads due to the domineering activities of hi-tech information systems and the challenges they pose to the meek and often apologetic traditional orientation of librarianship, resulting in a shift from the traditional method of information delivery to modern approach to library and documentation services (Chimah, Uhegbu and Nwokocha, 2011). These modern tools of acquiring, disseminating and accessing information have been branded different names at different times ranging from computerized library, electronic library, digital library, virtual library or library without walls. Libraries' parent bodies are therefore challenged to establish a kind of hybrid library system that would provide both physical and electronic information resources for their library users.

This study aims to trace the historical antecedents of libraries of the ancient and modern times; evaluate the relevance of libraries in the information society; find out the effect of political and socio-economic dynamics on libraries; identify the challenges confronting public, national and academic libraries; proffer solutions to the factors militating against development and utility of libraries in Nigeria. In other words, this paper seeks to analyze the interplay between the importance of libraries and the effect of political and socio-economic dynamics on Nigerian libraries. This study seeks to proffer solutions to the identified problem.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Beginning and Utility of Libraries

The ancient world had great value for libraries and a lot of resources and effort were invested in their development. Ancient libraries thrived not only as a status symbol but also as a citadel of learning, information and education. Libraries have always been a kind of resort for seekers of knowledge and a place for the preservation of culture. In all civilizations, the library has been known to serve as a springboard for political, cultural, religious, technological and socio-economic development. This section intends to highlight some libraries including the first as well as the largest ones till date focusing on their history and utilities. Tabulated below are examples of some libraries and their historical antecedents, vis-à-vis impact on societal development.

Examples of National, Public and Academic Libraries from Ancient to Modern times

Libraries	Establishment and Services to the society
Alexandria Library	The Royal Library of Alexandria was a public library open to those with proper scholarly & literary qualifications such as scientists, mathematicians, poets and philosophers from all cultures. The Library was the first library to serve as a legal depository library where several materials were acquired for it by Royal Decree. It was founded by Alexandria the Great after the conquest of Egypt in 332 B.C.
The Celsius Library	The Celsius Library built in the ancient city of Ephesus in present day Turkey has been described as one of Antiquity's finest libraries. It was established in 110AD by the council Gaius Julius Aquila and became one of the largest collections of antiquity with an estimated 12,000 hand-written books.
The University of Sankore Library	The University Library at Sankore, Timbuktu, in today's Mali was known as an ancient seat of Muslim learning. It was established in 989 AD by Al-Qadi Aqib ibm Mahmud Umar. It was famous for its large collection of manuscripts. It achieved this feat by engaging an army of Scribes who earned their living by copying manuscripts. It had two sets of copyists: the ordinary Scribes who were paid according to prevailing rates and the monks who lived in the monasteries.
The Bodleian Library	This is acknowledged as one of the oldest surviving libraries in Europe. The Bodleian Library is in Oxford, England, and its collection consisted not only of books and manuscripts for it also housed pictures, sculptures, coins and medals. Today's Bodleian Library has about 11 million volumes with full access to online

	publications and databases, better than any other academic library in the United Kingdom.
Chetham's Library	Regarded as the United Kingdom's oldest free public reference library, Chetham's library was established in Manchester, England in 1653, till date, this library has remained a veritable venue for research in all branches of learning. It is also in the forefront of institutions that promote scholarship.
The British Library	The British Library in London, England came into existence in 1972. It is considered one of the world's most extensive collections especially given the versatility of one of its constitutional bodies – the British Museum. The caliber of guests that visit the British Museum Library is an eloquent testimony of its importance in learning and information.
The Library of Congress	The Library of Congress was founded by an Act of Congress which was signed by president John Adams in 1880. It is regarded as the oldest federal cultural institution in the United States. It became a victim of fire, during the war for Independence in 1814. The library's core collection of 3,000 volumes was destroyed by British troops when they burnt the Capitol Building. The credit for the founding of the library is shared between President John Adams and personal library of 6,487 volumes as replacement for the burnt volumes. Today, the Library of Congress is acknowledged as the largest library in the world with about 160million catalogued books on approximately 650millions of books on shelves and other printed materials in 460 languages, about 70million manuscripts, 6milliob maps and about 5,4million pieces of sheet music.
The National Library of Nigeria	The National Library of Nigeria was established through an Act of Parliament in Sept. 1964 and opened for the public in November 1964. It is a parastatal in the presidency but supervise by the Federal ministry of Education. The military government of General Yakubu Gowon repealed the Act and promulgated Decree No.29 of 1979 in an attempt to remedy some observed inadequacies of 1964 Act. The Legal Deposit Law makes it compulsory for individual publishers to deposit certain number of copies to the National Library.

Sources: *Nwokocha (2017); Tabulation – author's.*

It is unfortunate that the National Library of Nigeria is still on rented apartment as its Abuja headquartered building is yet to be completed. It is noteworthy however, that in Africa libraries had a shaky beginning given the high level of illiteracy in the act of reading and writing. Indeed most of African tradition is rooted in oral literature where information is passed on by word of

mouth. This posed a serious problem in the establishment and proper running of libraries in Africa.

The Importance of Library in the Society

However, events in the 16th century and subsequent other revolutions made books more readily available to the larger segment of the society. The movable printing press ensured speedy and less labourous publication of books. This development brought books at the disposal of many more people especially those who genuinely have need for books either for education, training, learning or relaxation. The modern library therefore is an institution open to all and sundry who are encouraged to visit in order to benefit from the library collection. Realistically, it is difficult to find any segment of the society or sector of the economy that does not require the services of the library. Nwokocha (2017) categorically states that *"any segment of the society that pretends to do without the library is only deluding itself or at best operating at half capacity*." He further noted that despite efforts to play down on the relevance of libraries in modern society, libraries remain key players in societal enterprise. International, National and State laws are replete with legal provisions that provide for the establishment and operation of libraries. In many cases, the law makes it mandatory for the setting up of libraries especially in higher institutions.

For example, in the state of Michigan, United States, the law provided that "The legislature shall provide by law for the provision reliant to public libraries which shall be available to all residents of the State under regulations adopted by the governing bodies thereof". Similarly, many States in Nigeria have laws providing for public and academic libraries.

Most countries have laws establishing their national libraries. Institutions of higher learning including Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges have the establishment and operation of libraries, as part of their statues and therefore obligatory on them. In all universities, including Ebonyi State University, the law states inter-alia:

> There shall be for the University a University Librarian who shall be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the administration of the University Library and the coordination of the library services in the University and its campuses, colleges, faculties, schools, departments, institutes and other teaching or research units.

Judging by the way and manner libraries are treated and regarded by some governments, administrators, scholars and students among others, one often wonder what would have been the

fate of libraries especially in Nigeria but for those laws. The most intriguing side of this neglect of the library is that some of those who have benefitted from the noble services of libraries are not exempted from this practice. Looking at our public libraries, school libraries, national library and even academic libraries, librarians are left to believe that all the remarks about the importance of libraries by Nigerian governments are mere rhetoric. Public libraries which champion the philosophy of "read and get educated" have been literally left to decay in many cases, and thus denying the reading public their services.

Libraries as Venues for Scholarship and Education

Studies have shown that countries with an interest in reading and libraries are also the wealthy and technologically advanced nations. It is difficult to separate the library from development, science and technology. Nwokocha (2017) notes that modern research is hardly conducted in isolation but based on results of earlier studies. In this area, libraries serve as fundamental and most times, inevitable sources. Prolific writers and renowned scientists are known to be regular clients of the library where they consult studies and works of other renowned scholars which serve as stepping stones in their own research. It is by consulting the library that scholars acquaint themselves with research activities in their fields in order to avoid repetition and at the same time become aware of the trend in the field.

No matter what detractors do or say, the library is at the heart of all academic activities in institutions of higher learning especially the university where, all activities of members of staff and students resolve around it. Many scholars believe that librarians are synonymous with education and offer countless learning opportunities capable of driving economic, social political and cultural development. A book has the capacity to not only change one's life, it also can transform lives of those in one's village or community if the reader applies what was learnt from the book. Scholars and world leaders are largely agreed in their affirmation that books, information and libraries are interwoven and are known to work together to promote education and societal development.

The Role of Libraries in Political and Economic Development

People need to be able to find and use information in order to understand how the political system works, and participate in formal and informal political activities, it is of great importance

the libraries should provide such information in order to contribute to democratic ideals, as a spreader of information and knowledge. Nigerian libraries provide information materials required in the training of high and middle level manpower necessary for the political, economic, social and technological advancement of any nation through teaching, research and community development, Nwokocha and Horsfall (2019). They further stated that Libraries in Nigeria are central in the pursuit of political and economic development as they help in promoting access to relevant information for the development of effective national policy framework which will enhance the political and economic development in Nigeria.

The key areas of information provision by libraries and information profession to political development and stability are specifically highlighted by Onah, Obim, Owraigbo and Owoicho, (2020) as follows:

1. Provision of adequate political information

2. Information Literacy Skills Campaign

3. Re-orientation of Nigerian political culture

4. Provision of Entrepreneurship Information/ Skills Acquisition

5. Building an Information Society

6. Supporting educational development

7. Provision of Information Materials

8. Open Access to Information

9. Political Value Re-Orientation of Nigerian Electorates

10. Creation of Political Awareness

Okuonghae & Obadare (2020) had carried out a study which investigated library and information services for socio-political rebirth in Nigeria. They adopted a survey type of descriptive research design for a population of 59 library staff from Delta State Library Board, Asaba and Edo State Library Board, Benin City in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. Using complete enumerative sampling technique, questionnaire was adopted as the tool for data collection. Out of the 59 copies of questionnaire distributed, 55 were retrieved and found useful, constituting 93% response rate. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the vital library and information services for socio-political rebirth in Nigeria include community club and community involvement services, internet access services, research support

services, organizing maker space programmes, awareness and sensitization campaign, readership campaign, computer and entrepreneurial training amongst others.

Furthermore, the study showed that majority of the library and information services for socio-political rebirth in Nigeria are rendered less often (occasionally) due to the problems faced by public libraries in services delivery which includes poor funding, epileptic power supply, lack of adequate support from the government, inadequate library infrastructure, poor users' perception of the library and poor reading culture among Nigerians. The study recommended that the government should have total commitment in the provision of infrastructure, recruitment of competent librarians and improved welfare packages for effective service delivery among public libraries in the state. Therefore, all state government should make library development a top priority.

The Role of Library and Information Centres in Resolving Conflicts
Conflicts are inevitable in any given society. They are caused by many reasons including land dispute, natural resources bunkering and/or illegal mining, political attacks (during electioneering period) etc. However, libraries and librarians have a role to play in resolving conflicts. Urhiewhu and Aji (2015) assert that though information officers and librarians may not be military people, because of their professional background, they are usually equipped to provide technical information services to experts in other fields using the language they understand most since language is a synergy. In providing information services, librarians may need to adopt campaigning or mobile libraries to bring library services to the doorsteps of citizens to educate them on national security. Nwalo (2003) observed that the compilations made by mobile libraries reflect perceived needs of local communities. This will help to provide security services to communities and help citizens and patrons of the library attain maximum information services, in spite of their vocations.

Effect of Adverse Policies on Nigerian Public Libraries
The major stakeholders of public libraries include the users, staff, funding agencies, legislative bodies, members of the public, and donor agencies, among others. These stakeholders could be safely classified as internal and external publics. The publics are the different groups or stakeholders which the librarians communicate with on regular bases. Eze (2013) notes that the problem of none peaceful co-existence between the various internal and external stakeholders of

our public libraries has posed a tremendous challenge. Sometimes, our public libraries will experience arbitrary cut backs on funding by the relevant bodies and some other times boardroom squabbles, strike actions, unfavourbale fiscal policies, downsizing of personnel, or even outright clamping down on the libraries by the government.

Some time ago, a public library at Nsukka was stifled and turned to a filling station and part of the building was reconstructed to house a senatorial district office of the one of the Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Also in 2013 one of the South Eastern states' government slated the only public library in the state for demolition and to replace it with a Church park. These developments have left much to be desired and have raised crises situation and sometime a purse to question certain government policies and decisions on Nigerian public libraries. If these crises situation and adverse public policies are not managed very well, it could lead to total breakdown of law and order which will of course negatively reflect on general public library services.

Nigerian Academic Libraries Funding Challenges
The Nigerian government has made several efforts in promoting quality library and information delivery service in tertiary education systems, including the establishments of tertiary institutions regulatory bodies such as NUC, NCCE and NABTE, policy formulation, funding among others to regulate the activities of higher education in Nigeria for better output. However, Sokari (2022) observe that in the last two decades, there has been serious concern about the decay in the Nigeria academic libraries. According to him, the academic library in most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are ill-equipped, unable to subscribe and maintain academic database and serial subscriptions, inadequate ICT facilities, inadequate books collection and other items of information to meet the information needs of the user community.
Lamenting on the sorry state of Nigerian academic libraries, Folorunso & Urhiewhu (2018), reported that many academic libraries cannot boast of latest titles of books in all fields of studies that their collections represent and cover. Olukotun (2020) expresses similar view that the same kind of decay has overtaken most of the university libraries, many of which were stocked with old books, unkempt and featuring yellowing pages.

Funding Nigerian academic libraries is faced many challenges. The followings are some of the challenges as identified by Sokari (2022).

1. Inadequate Funding of the Educator Sector: The issue is that academic libraries require funding from the institutions who established them. But they are not immune to the problem of inadequate funding of the institutions they serve. Over the years, budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria from which academic libraries derived large proportion of their funding has not been sufficient enough to meet the basic demands of tertiary education systems. To lend credence to this assertion, Ezekwesili (2006) cited in Ameh, Wonah, & Nwannunu, (2018) contend that underfunding of education especially at the tertiary level has become a persistent occurrence in Nigeria as funds released to the tertiary sector can no longer meet the increasing demands and growth of Nigeria in tertiary institutions.

2. Diversion of Library Funds to other Projects: Library funds are supposed to be meant for library management and development. The academic institutions authorities tend to divert the money allocated to library development to other projects. They should stop diverting funds due their libraries and ensure that the prescribed 10% of their recurrent grant actually go to the library.

The import of this is that government at all levels has failed in the area of budget allocation to education. Strikingly, World Bank (2012) cited in Asiyai (2015) analysis of budgetary allocation to education sector in selected countries of the world indicates that Nigeria is the backwater in terms of budgetary allocation. The analysis shows the following as tabulated in the table below:

Selected Budgetary Allocation to Education Sector

S/N	Selected Country	Allocation to Education Sector
1	Ghana	31%
2	Cote d'lvore	30%
3	Uganda	27%
4	Morocco	26.4%
5	South Africa	25%
6	Swaziland	24.6%
7	Mexico	24.3%
8	Kenya	23.0%

9	Botswana	19.0%
10	USA	17.1%
11	Burkina Faso	16.8%
12	Norway	16.2%
13	Colombia	15.6%
14	India	12.7%
15	Nigeria	8.4%

Source: Asiyai (2015); Tabulation – Author's

This is a huge disparity, but it has been the noxious trend. From this meager budget Nigerian academic libraries in public institutions are funded. The culminating effect is that the academic libraries are exposed to unhealthy financial constraints as subvention from government has been inadequate to take care of their needs. UNESCO (1995) had recommended 26% budgetary allocation to education in terms of GDP but Nigerian government appears to play down on this recommendation despite the numerous mineral resources at her disposal. To address this challenge, government as a matter of urgency should improve in its allocations to the education sector with serious emphasis on school, public and academic libraries.

Libraries' and Librarians' Advocacy Roles

According to Madu (2005) advocacy is a political process by an individual or group which aims to influence public policy and resources allocation decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing opinion polls. Lobbying is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on an issue. Advocacy represents the series of actions taken and issues highlighted to change "what is" into "what should be" considering that this "what should be" is more decent and egalitarian to societal cause. Advocacy is important to libraries because advocacy inform public library users and the community as a whole about library services and their value. Demonstrate how public library services – including access to the Internet – improve the lives of people in the community. Ensure libraries have resources to continue offering these important services.

According to Iyejare, (2023) libraries contribute significantly to the growth of a country by facilitating access to knowledge, fostering literacy, and encouraging a culture of learning. However, the growth and efficacy of libraries have been hampered in Nigeria due to a number of issues. Iyejare (2023) believes that the following factors have adverse effect on library development and services: inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, lack of qualified staff, inadequate collection development, insufficient collaboration and networking, inadequate community engagement, lack of awareness, security challenges, inefficient management, cultural barriers. Librarians' advocacy activities are panacea to these challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Proposing a theoretical framework for library services especially for the poor, Rcelis (2018) asserts that libraries and librarians have the opportunity to provide for the human dignity of these persons and form relationships that will make the library an important part of their lives. He provided the following success elements as being inclusive library services for the poor.
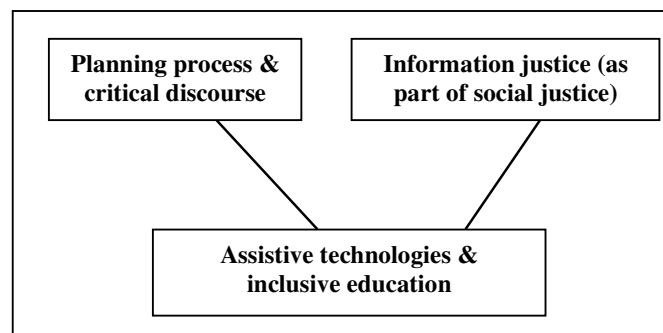

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for Library Social Responsibility

Methodology

The article adopted an exploratory research design. Secondary data were obtained using a desk review of existing literature on state of Nigerian public, national and academic libraries. Emphasis is given to the qualitative analysis of case study discussions on the importance of libraries and the effect of political, policies and social-economic dynamics on libraries in Nigeria with particular reference to concepts, theories and practice. Theoretical framework based on library social responsibility and the role of government in the provision of library and information needs of the people is employed and discussed.

Discussion

Planning process and Critical discourse

Library planning models have been used since 1987 that have been rather successful. For instance, a model that offers a list of services responses can communicate the ways in which a library meets the needs of specific communities. A way in which these services responses have been carried out and disseminated is through the creation of an authentic discourse which is critical and can be analyzed. Discourse analysis views a prevailing social order and social processes as constituted and sustained less by the will of individuals than by the pervasiveness of particular constructions or versions of reality, referred to as discourses. Applied to libraries or librarianship, one can take the discourse example, on the library as a calling or vocation, and create theories, practices or research writing on the matter. In a special way, critical discourse analysis focuses on how the social space within which individuals and groups act is structured by discursive activity (Koeberle, 2012).

Informational Justice (as part of social justice)

Justice, as a social virtue, is an important component of moral judgments and plays a critical role in inclusive or global education. The core values of librarianship include social equity and justice, democracy, the public good, and diversity. One of the important drivers of educational innovation and social inclusion is the school library, as it has competency in the logical organization of information. The educational problem where formal education is invested in the globalized information society is not only that of guaranteeing access to information, but rather that of evaluating and comparing whether and how a school knows how to form students who know how to understand, re-elaborate, digest, and use this information.

Libraries can serve as advocates for social justice, as well as promoters of human dignity and of sustainable development activities. In this view, public librarians are seen as having the responsibility to treat information services for social welfare as a fundamental aspect of their current services. In particular, equity of access is part of this core principle of libraries' social justice and welfare provision (Abdullahi, 2015; Pereyaslavska and Abba, 2015).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to review the underpinning relevance of libraries and juxtaposed it with the seeming apathy by stakeholders (particularly the government) and indeed the political elites who ironically are beneficiaries of the enormous benefits including education and scholarship that the libraries have always offered to their patrons. The highlight on some libraries of the world offers clear lesson of the utility of development of human knowledge towards the past, the present and the future age. Some of the selected libraries have been discussed to highlight the value placed on libraries right from the ancient period as represented by the Alexandria Library of Egypt to the present age represented by the Library of Congress in Washington, DC of the United States.

Subsequently, salient areas affecting library service delivery were analytically discussed. These bothered on the importance of library in the society; libraries as venues for scholarship and education; the role of libraries in political and economic development; the role of library and information centres in resolving conflicts; effect of adverse policies on public libraries; poor funding challenges of academic libraries.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study the followings are recommended:

i.   Governments (Federal, State and the Local Councils) alike should ensure that they allocated appreciable and or/statutory fund for tertiary, secondary and primary schools and their libraries.

ii.   Governing Councils and Management of Tertiary Institutions should take library development and its utility as a project of paramount importance by ensuring the 10% of the budgetary allocation of the institutions are channeled towards library development.

iii. Librarians and library development committee should continue to play their advocacy roles for their libraries, by continual soliciting for increased percentage of funds through budgetary allocation of both the federal and state governments.

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iv. Reading culture should be improved by inculcating reading habit on pupils, students at all level of the education system. Because it is one thing to establish and equip libraries with relevant materials and another thing to utilize them.

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