# HISTORY AND DEVELOPMET OF POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**
*The importance of polytechnics in the technical, technological and vocational development of the contemporary society cannot be over emphasized. The main objective of the paper is to discuss the history and development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria, using documentary evidence. The paper started by painting a vivid picture of the origin of polytechnics in Nigeria and its step-by-step metamorphosis. In the discussion proper, the paper highlighted the meaning of polytechnics, polytechnic library and the place of libraries in the growth and development of polytechnics, using five polytechnics: Yaba College of Technology; the Kaduna Polytechnic; Auchi Polytechnic, the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and the Federal Polytechnic, Offa as focal point. Basic challenges and problems to the development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria were highlighted. The paper concludes by making recommendations on the way forward for polytechnic libraries, which include adequate funding, more stringent laws on the use of TETfund annual library intervention and improvement in the provision of ICT facilities in libraries among others.*

**Keywords:** History, Development, Polytechnic Libraries, Nigeria

## Introduction

The importance of polytechnics in the technological and vocational advancement of contemporary societies cannot be over emphasized. *The Merriam Webster Dictionary* (2019) defines polytechnic as an institution of higher learning offering courses at degree level or below, especially in vocational subjects. The main objectives of polytechnic education are the promotion of technical and vocational education and training, technology transfer and skills development to enhance the socio-economic development of the country. Polytechnic education plays a vital role in human resources development of a country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life (Amiampong, 2014). Polytechnic education in Nigeria is one out of the three tiers of tertiary education in Nigeria. It is charged

with the responsibility of producing the technical, technological and vocational manpower needed for industrial growth in Nigeria. This is a responsibility the polytechnics discharge alongside with Universities of Technology in Nigeria. Polytechnics offer courses and programmes in various fields of technology and applied sciences leading to the award of National Diploma (ND) Certificate for the first two years of study and a Higher National Diploma (HND) Certificate for the second stage of the four year programme. In each stage, the students are expected to undergo a one year industrial training (internship) on completion of the programme registered for.

In Nigeria, technical education came into being with the establishment of the Hope Waddell Training Institute (HWTI), Calabar by missionaries from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1895. It was established as the first technical institution, while Boys' High School, Bonny was established as vocational institution by native pastorate. The technical education system came during the colonial era when the technical and vocational manpower to process raw materials at low price became deficient; hence their establishment became inevitable (Taylor, 1996). The history of polytechnic education in Nigeria could be traced back to the establishment of Yaba College of Technology in 1947. Yaba College of Technology was the first institution of higher education in Nigeria. It was established in 1934 to provide final stage training, leading to the production of assistants in medical and engineering fields and some other vocations. In 1945, however, the Yaba Higher College was converted to technical institute to produce technicians that the Country's economic development would require. Following the conversion of Yaba Higher College, in its place, Yaba Technical College was established in 1947. Thus, the Yaba Technical College on its creation in 1947 took off with academic activities in 1947/1948 academic session (Oduma, 2018). The success stories recorded by polytechnic education have resulted to the increasing number of polytechnics in Nigeria. Today, there are about 132 polytechnics in Nigeria, made up of federal, states and private owned polytechnics (Fapohunda, 2019).

Specifically, polytechnic education in Nigeria is meant to provide technical learning that could assist the Nigerian society in meeting her industrial aspirations. One distinctive mark of polytechnic education is the strong emphasis it has on practical based learning, with work-attachment as part of the practical curriculum. The entire curriculum design and instructional delivery pattern are targeted at enabling the students to have on-the-job work experience. The education provided by the polytechnic is directly focused on the students' future career (Addison (2012; Tayo, 2014). According to Adeoti (2019), Decree No. 33 of 1979 as amended by Decree No. 5 of 1993 and the Federal Polytechnics (Amendment) Act CAP F17, LFN of 2004 established polytechnics in Nigeria and assigned it with the following functions:

(a)     to provide full-time or part-time courses and training in technology, applied science, commerce and management in such other fields of applied learning relevant to the needs of the development of Nigeria in the areas of industrial and agricultural production and distribution and for research in the development and adaptation of techniques as the Council may from time to time determine.

(b)     to arrange conferences, seminars and study groups relative to the fields of learning specified in paragraph (a) above may serve to promote the objectives of the Polytechnic.

(c)     to perform such other functions as in the opinion of the Council.

Interestingly, one of the factors for measuring academic success is research productivity, which requires the use of information resources (published and unpublished). In academic institutions, these resources are statutorily made available by libraries (Okiki, 2013). To this end, the functions of polytechnics and other tertiary institutions in the development of the nation's educational system cannot be performed effectively and efficiently without libraries. These categories of libraries provided by polytechnics are referred to as polytechnic libraries.

A polytechnic library is a type of academic library established to cater for the information needs of the institutional community which includes education, research and recreation by making available resources both in print and non-print medium on past and current information (Obaseki, 2018). A polytechnic library is a type of academic library; an integral part of a polytechnic and administered to meet the information and research needs of its students, faculty and staff (Reitz, 2004). Polytechnic libraries provide information

services to the polytechnic community. It is an information centre, which helps in the realization of the objectives of the polytechnic. It supports teaching, learning and research of the host institution, thereby fostering intellectual development of both staff and students. This without doubt indicates that the success of any academic institution depends on the library as well as its condition (Momodu, 2015).

It is in consideration of the overall importance of polytechnic libraries in the complex matrix of information generation, organization and dissemination for development in polytechnics that this paper looks into the history and development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. The paper is organized into three segments namely history and development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria, problems and challenges of polytechnic libraries and the way forward for polytechnic libraries in Nigeria.

## History and Development of Polytechnic Libraries in Nigeria

The world's oldest known library was founded sometime in the 7th century B.C. for the "royal contemplation" of the Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal, located in Nineveh in modern day Iraq (Andrews, 2016). In the last decade or so, the library and information industry has definitely experienced what can best be described as a revolution. There have been tremendous changes in the kinds and forms of services provided by different categories or types of libraries in Nigeria. Most of the polytechnics libraries in Nigeria came into existence with the establishment of these institutions because academic libraries are integral part of any educational system. Administrations of most polytechnic libraries in Nigeria are centralized under the polytechnic librarian. Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria started as pure traditional libraries. Today, many of them have grown from traditional libraries to hybrid and electronic libraries. They have transformed in the 21st century to focus less on physical collection development and more on information access and digital resources. Today's polytechnic libraries typically provide access to subscription-based online resources, including research databases and eBooks collections in addition to physical books and journals. This is made possible with the advent of ICT and their use in libraries. ICT has brought about hybrid and digital libraries, which have changed the nature as well as job profile of librarians and information professionals bringing about new demands and expectations both from library users and librarians (Adebayo and Adekunjo, 2013).

At the advent of ICT into the services and operations of libraries, it was powered by analogue data. Today, there is a shift from manual ways of carrying out information services to electronic means of accessing and retrieving information by means of electronic gadgets such as the World Wide Web (www) and handsets. This shift was indispensible because for polytechnic libraries to be where they are, they have to fully recognize the fact that the world is living in virtual realities as indicated by Omekwu and Echezona (2008) where library services will be in the web and not affected by opening and closing hours

Today, polytechnic libraries in Nigeria are embracing advancement of the 21st Century information and communication technology. Different polytechnics are at different stages in this advancement. The first polytechnic that came into the educational landscape of Nigeria was the Yaba College of Technology. The famous Yaba College of Technology, as an academic institution came into being under decree No.23 of 1969, embodied with the provision to establish a polytechnic library to facilitate and complement the purposes of supporting the school curriculum; to support the research of the polytechnic faculty and students; and to support teaching and learning and provides materials for class reading and for student papers. The decree also granted it the mandate to provide full-time and part-time courses of instruction and training in technology, applied science, commerce and management, agricultural production and distribution; and for research. Yaba College of Technology is the first higher institution in Nigeria to establish a Centre for Entrepreneurship Development. The centre offers compulsory courses which must be taken by all students throughout their stay in the college. The Applied Research and Technology Innovation (ARTI) Unit was established to promote research and linkages with private sector organizations for the exploitation and use of research (Yaba College of Technology, 2010).

Over the years, the library of the institution has grown alongside the parent institution. Today, Yaba College of technology offers B.Sc (Ed) courses in technical and vocational education and postgraduate diplomas in Engineering. The programmes are run in conjunction with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the Federal University of Technology, Akure, respectively. This feat was made possible partly because

of the support of the library (Yaba College of Technology, 2010). The library is made up of six departments: the polytechnic librarian office, readers' services, technical services, serials, information and communication technology, archive, research and documentation. The library acquires, catalogue and classify information resources available in the library. The library subscribes to EBCOHOST database (ebcohost.co), which enhances access to current subjects related to e-journals. The library uses the Lib-Plus library software package to carry out its functions (Yabatech College Library, 2017).

The Kaduna Polytechnic started in 1951. The idea to start a technical institution in Northern Nigeria started as far as 1951 which resulted into the establishment of Kaduna Technical Institution in 1956. The establishment of technical institute in Kaduna was as a result of the acceptance by the British Government on the recommendation of the Higher Education Commission, which suggested the upgrading and proposed Technical Institute in Kaduna. The Northern Nigeria Executive Council at the meeting of 17th August 1962 re-designated the Technical Institute Kaduna, as the Polytechnic. It became Kaduna Polytechnic in 1968 by the Federal Government Decree No. 20 of 1968, which was revised in 1979 by Decree No.79. In 1991, the institution was taken over by the Federal Government under Decree No. 40 of the same year. The Kaduna Polytechnic Library is named "Isa Kaita Library Complex" after the first minister of education of the defunct Northern Regional Government of Nigeria. The library has grown with the institution, providing information resources of all kinds (manual and electronic), thereby making teaching, learning, research and development easier.

Auchi Polytechnic is also one of the first four leading polytechnics in Nigeria. It was founded in 1963; first as a Technical College and later in 1973 as a polytechnic. The history of other polytechnics date back to 1983 and was made possible, with the enactment of Decree 9 of 1983, which gives individuals, corporate organizations, etc, the right to establish polytechnics. The Auchi Polytechnic library stocks items such as books, journals, magazines and electronic information resources. To achieve its stated objectives, missions and goals, the library provide such services as: assistance to clients with special needs, provision of loan services, provision of e-library services; user education aimed at getting library users on how to use the library effectively; photocopy and reprographic services; study areas and facilities (Onadapo, 2016). Today, the Auchi Polytechnic library combines traditional and electronic library services in its operations (Auchi Polytechnic, 2018). The Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, library was established simultaneously with other academic departments in the institution in January 1978. The digital library of the Federal Polytechnic, Ado -Ekiti is envisioned to be one of the best ICT compliant libraries in Nigeria. The ICT/ E- library section of the library is sub-sectioned into: Digitalization unit; research, document and TETFund;  surveillance and server room and E- Library and ILMS.

The Federal Polytechnic Offa library, named after Late Williams Adedoyin, was established in 1992 at the Mini Campus of the institution. Presently, the polytechnic has two libraries; one at the Mini Campus and one at the permanent site of the institution. The polytechnic library was set up to provide adequate information services to the polytechnic community which consists of students, lecturers, technologists and administrative staff of the six schools and the various administrative units of the polytechnic in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs. There are four major sections in the library: administrative section, reader services section which consists of circulation section, reference section and reserve book section; technical services section which encompasses the cataloguing and classification unit, serials unit and reprography unit as well as the e-library section. Both Libraries have e-libraries sections with several laptops and desktops for both staff and students' use which became fully operational in 2012. The libraries are rich in current literature with 19,218 volumes of books, reference materials and different journals in engineering, sciences, applied sciences, social sciences, environmental management, humanities and other interdisciplinary fields of study. In addition, the libraries provide to users a range of Information and Communication Technologies necessary for retrieving information quickly from both immediate and remote databases. The e-library units of the libraries has over 50 fully-networked computers with a Proliant server connected to the Internet on C-band VSAT and it has electronic information resources such as EbscoHost, E-Granary, Elsevier, Centro Books and Science Direct which are made available to users at no cost for their

research activities. Other equipment at the library include four network printers, barcode readers, scanners, over head projectors, display screen, public address system and other audiovisual resources.

No doubt, polytechnics and polytechnic libraries in Nigeria since inauguration have received various levels of aggrandizement from Federal Government, State Government as well as donor agencies, all in a bid to meet up with their target of developing students' self-belief and analytical faculties which are imperative to eventful participation in societal growth and expansion (Addison, 2012). It is of note that the contemporary breakthrough experience in the area of Internet and ICTs in Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria has boosted the information output of these libraries.

### Problems and Challenges of Polytechnic Libraries Development

As we look at the development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria, a number of problems and challenges militating against it should be noted so that we can try to find answers to such problems. Khan and Bhatti (2012) in a review of problems and challenges of library professionals in developing countries identified the following as some of the problems of polytechnic libraries development: un met demand of professionally trained staff; chronic and severe shortage of financial resources; inadequate funding, leading to inadequate collections; poor physical facilities and lack of management strategies and poor communication between librarians and polytechnic administrators. In addition to lack of professionally trained staff, other problems confronting African academic libraries are identified by Chisenga (2002) as inadequate technology infrastructure, lack of computers, networks, bandwidths and even vandalism in some areas. Ademola and Adepoju (2009) investigated the computer skills among librarians in academic libraries in Ondo and Ekiti States in Nigeria and found that the shortage of computers and computer skills among professionals hindered academic libraries development.

The problems can be summarized as follows: negative attitude of management towards polytechnic library; inadequate funding; problem of innovation by library heads and in some cases lack of qualified staff among others. The problems are discussed one after the other:

**Negative Attitude of Management towards Polytechnic Library:** Most polytechnic libraries and their librarians in Nigeria have been observed to be relegated to a domicile position by their respective parent management. This is so as the management disregards suggestions or opinions from the librarians regarding the library development and growth. Obaseki (2008) observes that some polytechnic management have negative attitude towards the polytechnic library. They do not accord any form of respect to the libraries, but only see libraries as store house of books, hence the librarians as bookkeepers as such disregard opinions and suggestions they have regarding library development.

**Inadequate Funding**: Inadequate or poor funding of polytechnic libraries is a challenge. Not much budget is released for libraries for the acquisition of library resources. In some cases, funds made for library development, especially TETfund library interventions are diverted. Poor funding has stifled the growth of libraries in the polytechnics making it difficult for these libraries to perform their roles in national development.

**Lack of library Policy:** Most polytechnic libraries in Nigeria do not operate with library policy. Library policy helps to determine the types of library resources to acquire, ICT policy, acquisition policy and even categories of staff to employ. To buttress this point, Okiy (2005) avers that of all the different types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a clearly defined policy of funding, because they are allocated 10% of the recurrent annual budget of their parent institutions.

**Negative Attitude of Polytechnic Librarians:** Many polytechnic librarians have negative attitude to library development for reasons best known to them, they shy away from lobbying and advocacy to enable them get what they really need from management. Ochogwu (2014) submits that lobbying, advocacy and good public relations have become imperative for effective information delivery. For effective development of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria, polytechnic librarians should master the art of lobbying and advocacy.

**What Does the Future Hold for Polytechnic Libraries?**

We are optimistic that the future is bright for polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. But this can only be realistic if right approaches are taken in the right direction. The future can be bright for polytechnic libraries if funding is improved. In Universities, 10% of total recurrent expenditure is by policy set aside for the library. This policy can be replicated in polytechnics. The implementation can only be made possible by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the supervisory body for polytechnics in Nigeria. The future can hold better for polytechnic libraries in Nigeria if more stringent laws are made concerning the use of the TETfund annual library intervention in polytechnics. This will guard against the wanton diversion of the annual library intervention to other projects.

There is also the need for the level of provision of ICT facilities and infrastructure to be improved because it is the basic facility by which the delivery of information to all types of library users can be guaranteed. In the same vein, there is need for improvement in the level of computer and ICT literacy of librarians and other library staff of polytechnic libraries. This could be achieved through ICT training where library staff take compulsory ICT classes for additional knowledge and qualifications in ICT/computer, to have hands-on ICT skills for enhancing their proficiency. More so, librarians in polytechnics should become more professional and more proactive in the administration of polytechnic libraries. It is against this logic that Lawal (2009) posits that as libraries in Africa are adapting to changes brought about by the application of ICT, librarians and information professionals do not only need to adapt to these changes, but also require in-depth and structured training/education to function effectively.

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the library sub sector of the Nigerian educational system, especially polytechnic libraries are in transition, from pure traditional libraries to hybrid libraries and finally to fully automated libraries. Technological revolution that characterized this era has greatly impacted on polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. The paradigm shift in library and information business has become a paramount requirement in information delivery. Challenges abound in keeping pace with these developments. This means that management of polytechnic libraries, librarians and other information professionals must do the needful. There is need for a strong synergy to be established between administrators of polytechnics, managers of polytechnic libraries, library environment and of course modern library facilities and equipment for information generation, processing, organization, storage, preservation and access for the technical, technological and vocational advancement of Nigeria.

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