

CHUO KIKUU CHA NAIROBI

HUDUMA ZA MAKTABA

MAJADILIANO YA PILI:

MAKTABA NA MAENDELEO YA SEHEMU ZA

MASHAMBANI KATIKA KENYA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI LIBRARY'S POTENTIAL ROLE IN RURAL

DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

While acknowledging difficulties that face the University of Nairobi Library in its service to Kenyan rural people, the writer argues that there is, not only a duty, but a direct role that can be played. He cites user training and internal working changes as viable examples. He also urges library staff to informally take their knowledge to their people. The library should advise Government He sees Adult Studies students as important. The Library is urged to play a greater part in University research activities, documenting, availing, adapting and assessing University research. The writer argues that the rural people are as rich in wisdom as the academics are in scholarship and urges the University Library to mate the two and to discourage academic tourism.

Isn't it to the benefit of all Kenyans if the rural areas are developed?

(b) MEANINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

What is rural development? The Library of Congress List of Subject Headings guides Cataloguers thus :

" works on basic development of rural regions in either underdeveloped areas or in deprived areas of more advanced countries, emphasising improvements in the standard of living and the active participation of the local population in the programs set up."¹

The word rural in Kiswahili is : Sehemu za mashambani, mambo ya kishamba, as the title of this Workshop shows. The distinguishing features between rural and urban areas include : lower population density, less social mobility, less social differences, slower rates of social change.

1. Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, 8th ed. 1977 Supplement, p283 (Also in our Public Catalogue) Z95 .V4749 1975.

(a) KENYAN CONTEXT.

While talking about development, it is wise to distinguish wishes from practical possibilities; to distinguish dreams from reality; to distinguish ideals (and utopias) from the limited world we know and can achieve. Potential means possible; we will be talking about what can actually be done, what is latent in the institution called the University Library. We are aware of course that many constraints, the tightest being financial make some of these possibilities impractical in the short run. But in the long run possibilities should become realities.

Rural development in Kenya touches basically on the uplifting and the improving of the quality of life for the majority of Kenyans who live in the rural areas, but does not leave out the thousands of urban poor who have flocked into the city slums, because the rural areas have failed to sustain them any longer and the deceptive glamour of the city has tempted them, and those whose education has alienated them from their roots. The primary areas of rural development are : agriculture, education, health, small-industries, and culture. Rural development should aim at rejuvenating life in the rural areas; at making the areas attractive enough to attract back some of the unplaced urban poor. In any case, the majority of Kenyans are rural folk, and even the majority of urban people have their roots there. All you need to do is to go to Masaku Country Bus Stop, Tea Room Matatu Stop and Nyamakima to see the flocks of Nairobian's going home at the end of the month, but especially during public holidays. Few of us use the term " home" ambiguously. It mostly means "back there" in the rural areas. Isn't it then the concern of all Kenyans that the rural areas be developed?

less division of labour, less anonymity, less range of occupations, limited variety of social roles, less economic differences. Agriculture is the major occupation.^{2;3} The politico-economic system is centred on the land. Rural-urban areas are sometimes described as town suburbs and these are also of concern to us.

The stereotype dichotomy between rural and urban areas is very true of Kenya. The rural areas produce foods for the city. The city eats, depleting the wealth of the countryside, until there isn't enough for the rural people. The rural people begin trekking into town for work, the rural areas deteriorate and one would agree with Jimoh Omo-Fadaka, who has said that

"Copying the West has left African in a mess. The rural areas where nine out of ten Africans live have been ignored in ^{the} lopsided development of the last twenty years."⁴

Still as the Kenya Development Plan 1979-83⁵ will reveal, rural areas have not been totally forgotten, but the balance is still not quite right. The town eats more.

2. A dictionary of the Social sciences (Ref H 41. G6)

3. International encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, vol. 13. (Ref H 41 .E6)

4. Omo-Fadaka, Jimoh. "The future of development planning in Africa" in PHP Magazine, PHP Institute International Inc. vol (II) no 6 (117) June 1980. p.30-34, 59-66 (Available in Periodicals)

5. Kenya Development plan, 1979-83 Ch. 1-3 (Afr J 750-76 .D4 1979/83)

A new development philosophy is needed; an authentic African philosophy where the majority of people are not left "out of the eating." In development projects, the rural people must not be reduced to mere receivers of this development. They must be allowed to initiate and or participate in it. For this to be feasible, re-education is needed - a new education, not for the sake of it, but an appropriate, deliberate education designed to enable the people to get the best out of themselves and out of their areas. Development should be de-politicized and de-eliticized. This means that projects should not be for political ends nor as prestige symbols, nor as mere "examples" of foreign aid. They should not be manned by elites who dictate, rather than co-operate, nor should they be controlled by foreigners whose ideas of development are different from those of Kenyans. On this, you might be interested in reading a very interesting paper by Ngugi wa Mirii entitled On literacy content. In it, he argues convincingly that the high rate of drop outs in Adult classes is due to the fact that

"the present literacy content is irrelevant to the rural poor -----" 6

The programmes should be drawn up by local people, not by foreigners and elites. Ngugi gives The Kamirithu Literacy Project as a good example of a project whose success lay in the direct participation of the people concerned. Programmes should become the property of the people for whom they are set up.

6. Mirii, Ngugi wa." On literacy content.

PART II : THE UNIVERSITY, AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

AS AGENTS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The chief agents of rural development should be the rural people themselves, the government, including its various departments, and research institutions such as the University. The people should be supreme. Consultation between the various participants is an absolute necessity. The development must be participatory. To facilitate good communication, information is vital - it is a complete necessity. Information from and to both sides of the development flag. The University Library, with its vast resources of information and manpower should play a central role in the exchange and transfer of information. The University Library is an indispensable part of the University. Some, I included, argue that it is, or at least could become the most important organ of the University. Let us briefly consider the purposes of a University. I borrow from Yesufu in the book Creating the African University. Some of the purposes are :

- (a) Pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge.
- (b) Research
- (c) Provision of intellectual leadership.
- (d) Manpower development.
- (e) Promoting Social and economic modernization.
- (f) Promoting inter-continental Unity and International understanding. ⁷ (p42)

7. Yesufu, Tijani M. in Creating the African University
p. 42 (Ed LA 1503 .Y35 (Ids)

Now you notice no (1) would have to include a library to be effective don't you? To quote Yesufu further, he says :

" The emergent African University must, henceforth, be more than an institution for teaching, research and dissemination of higher learning. It must be accountable to and serve the vast majority of the people who live in the rural areas ----- must be committed to active participation in social transformation, economic modernization and the training and upgrading of the total human resources of the nation, not just a small elite." ⁸ (p42)

In all these processes, an information nucleus is vital. The library is a vital partner in any venture where information is basic. Information is important. Information is necessary for the liberation of people's minds by creating sharper awareness of themselves and their environment. Information is necessary for the effective control and use of knowledge. Information is necessary for leadership. Information is necessary for all development. But what are the practicalities of all this? Where does the University of Nairobi Library in the rural development of Kenya?

(1) CURRENT ROLE

Let us briefly assess the present, actual role of the University Library in rural development. The current role is indirect. The provision of material and research facilities to students, staff and researchers do help in their understanding of rural problems, so that for example, doctors going to practice in the rural areas already have some knowledge of what odds they face : the information prepares them better to deal with the people. The same can be said of all personnel

trained at the University and who consequently practice in the rural areas - teachers, economists, agriculturalists, etc.

The East Africana Collection, by storing and availing local material is playing a vital role in Kenyan development.

The Institute of Development Studies library perhaps plays a more direct role. IDS staff do research which is stored and disseminated by this library. Most of this research is on rural areas, or at least has bearing on them. The Institute of Adult Studies, Kikuyu trains adults, adult teachers, Community and social workers etc. who work in all areas, especially rural. It also broadcasts programmes for adults, again most of them in the rural areas, but one doubts whether the library at Kikuyu plays any significant role in these training programmes.

The training of all library users in the search and use of information helps them in their understanding of rural areas if they are interested, because they know how to get the material. The availing of user facilities to teachers and other graduate personnel who reside in rural areas helps them in coping "out there," and of course the training of any user in information use does have some effect in their own areas. While not ignoring problems such as space and academic level of available material, it may be worth our while re-examining reasons why only graduates are allowed Outside Borrower status. A University library ideally should also be able to cater for other citizens without necessarily becoming a public library. There are many potential users who are turned away. Do we really not have any responsibility towards them? If they cannot be allowed to come to us, perhaps we could think of how we could go to them?

While we talk of rural development, we cannot ofcourse blind ourselves to the good job the University Library is currently performing towards our students, staff and researchers.

(ii) THE POTENTIAL ROLE.

But is this adequate? For instance, the University sends our researchers to rural areas. There are field stations in various parts of the country, there are extra-mural officers scattered around the country and there are resident tutors out in the field. But does the library play a part in the jobs of these personnel Does the University Library reach "out there?"

Here, there is no confusion of roles between the University Library and the Kenya Library Services Board whose functions :

" Shall be to promote, establish, equip, manage, and maintain and develop libraries in Kenya" ⁹

We should complement and aid this Board with our higher trained manpower. We should be brothers in this development. We definitely ought to have an advisory role.

Any venture in serving rural areas obviously requires commitment of not only manpower, but deeper awareness of the problems to be solved. I wish now to suggest some methods that the University Library can use to serve the rural development of Kenya.

(a) USER TRAINING

Users should be trained to use library and information facilities better to derive maximum benefits from them. The key requirements is to train users in self-help information gathering and use. If users are self-helping wherever they are, they are able to cope with most information needs.

If for instance they are teachers, this trait may enable them to set up libraries or information rooms in their own schools. When you teach the child, the child goes back home and may teach the mother, the two may have exchanged information which they can use for their own development. The child also learns from the mother and takes this knowledge to school, to fellow pupils and teachers.

Because our role cannot be limited to simply availing material, we should be able to train users in research and documentation methods so that for instance an agriculturalist will be able to collect data, document it well, to enable him to meet and communicate with the rural people. If the University library is to do this, obviously a deep committment is required from library staff. A deliberate and exhaustive training programme should be mounted. We have the manpower. Do we have the will power and the time?

Under user training, the library could deliberately emphasise rural development. A multidisciplinary approach should be adopted so that engineers should be able to relate their trade to rural needs. There is no reason why a special collection on rural development should not be started. Of course you might suggest that if we begin a special collection on rural development we will eventually begin other collections on other areas, but this is not totally undesirable. If this is seen to result in over fragmentation, then cataloguers doing subject analysis should be more thorough in their identification of material falling into this category, and the subject catalogue should be larger, more analytical. The implications of any deliberate change in our library service of course goes beyond this subject and may need to be backed by changes in the educational system. For instance, undergraduates could be required to take assessed courses in say, sociology, Kenyan economics and literature etc. User training could be included in students' time-tables. This would require a new committment, self - education

of library staff, who would do extra, but I dare say interesting work.

(b) INTERNAL EFFORTS.

If this were to be adopted, all areas of the library could be involved. Periodicals would embark on abstracting and indexing material on rural areas. Acquisitions would be more deliberate in the selection of material, perhaps buy more from local publishers, even influence publishing policy. Library staff should play a major role in acquisition and selection of material. They could be used by publishers to assess the demand for various types of material. New relationships would have to be formed between librarians, publishers and educators. Cataloguers would have to rework some schedules to reflect more the Kenyan outlook in their cataloguing procedures. This has already been started, with class J schedules, happily. The library of Congress classification is inadequate in dealing with local material and local material is more important than foreign material. Though a useful tool, sections that are not helpful to us should be changed. Too much cataloguing time is spent over too many "rules" while the emphasis should be on subject analysis and choice of subject headings that are relevant to the Kenyan or the African scene. And of course, library staff should take their ujuzi to their own areas and people.

(c) CO-OPERATION WITH GOVERNMENT.

The University library should initiate interlibrary co-operation with rural based information centres, especially those run by the Government departments. Co-operation with Government agencies is also vital because government carries out policies. The University library should play an advisory role in the setting and running of information centres in the rural areas.

(d) THE INSTITUTE OF ADULT STUDIES.

The unending students of the Institute of Adult Studies should be a primary concern to us. It is disappointing that the library at Kikuyu is so small. Students come for short courses and the majority of them go back to the rural areas to continue their work. The library should seize upon this and mount intensive courses for these rural practitioners to enable them not only understand, but cope with the information needs in their areas of operation. We don't do this at all. Why? These people should be seen as some of the more important students because they include adult educators, social workers, community developers etc. Their training should include library and information use. The University Library should insist on doing this, because these people are the real rural developers. Their training should include such things as follow-ups to adult education classes, relevance of material used etc.

The Voice of Kenya radio facilities available to the extra-mural division should be exploited. Radio broadcasts on information use should be mounted by libraries, because the search and storage of information is primary to all man's functions. Information should be provided in a form and at a level useful to and digestible by the rural people. Librarians should be used to assess the information requirements of the Kenyan people.

(e) ON RESEARCH, INFORMATION TRANSFER AND EXCHANGE.

The University library should index papers, collect important articles and then circulate them cheaply to rural populations. Even translation services into national languages of vital material should be our concern, University papers and research, including those from Undergraduates on field work should be translated and cyclostyled cheaply, then distributed widely. If necessary, they should be simplified, adapted and translated to suit local conditions and areas

How do you view a challenge from a politician which says that :

"..... Libraries should have an African flavour, not out of narrow pride but rather for relevance and the development of individuality. The development of the African flavour calls on the African writer to develop his or her skills and trade so that larger portions of our libraries are filled with African Literature" ¹⁰ (p4)

He then suggests that African language material should be deliberately developed. Isn't this also a challenge for librarians, especially those in a University library. Aren't we partners in this development?

The University library should extend its services to rural people who are the vital primary sources of information. This can be done by seconding librarians to resident tutors in provinces and districts and to researchers on field work. Librarians should be used to evaluate the socio-economic information needs of researchers and workers in the field, including the rural people themselves, and then advising them on what research on, especially the neglected areas, how to use and communicate the information found and knowledge gained. The rural areas are banks of unknown information. Librarians should go and document it to enhance better understanding. Talking is easy. Doing is the problem. But it is worth trying all the same. As early as April May this year a group of University librarians had felt the need for them to attempt to be involved in rural librarianship. Nothing concrete can be cited yet, but I append minutes of meetings held by this group of librarians in May 1980, for your information. I also invite you to participate in this venture.

Research findings should not be stored away but should be well documented and then fed back to the primary sources for their adaptation and use. The library should become the nerve centre of information transfer and exchange, creating awareness, to help people cope better while in the rural areas. Librarians should go and bring back information to academics and researchers. Even rural laymen should be allowed to come and tell the academics what they know better. The two way process should be strengthened where researchers go to learn, not to 'discover'. There should be no patronising, and librarians are able to show that the academics scholarship is matched by the peasants age-old wisdom. The ideal is exchange. The Librarian should be the middle man, the medium of this exchange and transfer. Each feeds the other. In other words, the librarian should act as a link between researchers and their areas of interest to prevent the unfortunate, but real academic tourism that is prevalent. The degree often becomes the trophy, and all ends at that.

CONCLUSION

It is hardly possible to make a conclusion on a subject like this, if only because one feels that it has not been handled very conclusively. One could however still make a brief look over what has been said in the paper. I hope of course that points which have been perhaps missed or inadequately handled will be pointed out by participants.

While not understanding difficulties in the path, I feel that the University Library can play a further significant and direct role in uplifting and improving the quality of life in Kenyan rural areas.

One of the premises is that we have this as a duty, being Kenyans, and servants of the highest institution of learning in the land.

The suggested methods are listed below.

- (i) User training for self-help information and library use.
- (ii) A multi-disciplinary approach to this training to create wider awareness in our users.
- (iii) Periodicals to be indexed and abstracted relevantly.
- (iv) Acquisitions department to play a bigger role in the selection and acquisition of material; co-operation with local publishers.
- (v) Cataloguers to adapt LCSH to Kenyan needs : national, rather than international needs and standards to be adopted.
- (vi) Library Staff to take their ujuzi to their own areas and people.
- (vii) University Library to advise Government on rural information centres running and setting up.
- (viii) Students at the Institute of Adult Studies to be given more attention.
- (ix) Index, collect, simplify, adapt and translate important papers and documents, then cheaply circulate them to all potential users. We are not forgetting the vital role the East African Collection plays in storage and availing of local material, though only to a limited clientele.
- (x) Field-working university personnel, including students should be seconded by librarians to document and assess research needs etc.

- (xi) Discourage academic tourism by ensuring that only relevant, usable research is undertaken.
- (xii) Document and disseminate information from the rural areas.

These are perhaps high ideals, but I do not think any of them are beyond reach, given time, manpower, dedication, money and ofcourse staff working and enjoying their work as University librarians.

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