

# Challenges Of Symbiotic Alliance Of Democracy And Information Diversification In The Democratization Process In Nigeria: Public Libraries And Information Centers To The Rescue

Bolarinwa, J.ALABA., Olorunfemi, Doreen Yemisi

**ABSTRACT:** This paper examined the foreign governing policy of the ruling system of Africa or the black race of the less privileged that has come to stay in Nigeria. It is a new fashioned policy politically and socially designed from the past system to shape the future of the Nation. Information therefore is employed as catalyst for the developmental process that will stabilize the foreign policy. The type of governance and political policy practiced in the past is fading away hence the need for its visitation. The practitioners of the alien policy had narrated the beauty of the policy and the benefit of its practice and application. The implication of Information is to support the foregoing highlights in balancing the old governance and the present one. The practical application of the policy in an African context vis-à-vis the Western World may as well make us think whether Information will be adequate to keep up the task of continual re-shaping of the policy. This study used the historical research approach to assess scholars view with relation to alliance of democracy and information divergence in a democratic system of governance. The research findings revealed that: The social media (social networking) are a means of the liberalization of the media milieu by ICT; Democracy has become the secret for peace and development; information must be publicise and documented since human rights practices are a deterrent against human rights abuse; Librarians and professional resource persons must include the understanding of the processes of intellectual democratic values and interrelationships of academic knowledge into political principles within the complex social organization. From the findings above, the following recommendations were made: That there should be a well standardized Public Libraries, stocked with information materials on democratization process. There should be a monitoring team working in terms of intermediaries between the members of the parliaments, the custodian of the information (Librarians) and the public.

**Key Words:** Symbiotic Alliance, Democracy, information diversification, Public libraries, information Centres, Nigeria

## 1. Information Resources in Human Endeavour

[1] defines information as an embodiment of data presented in a readily comprehensible form to which meaning has been attributed within the context for its use. It is the message conveyed by the use of a medium of communication or expression, also information include all the facts, conclusions, ideas and creative perception or works of human intellect and imagination that have been communicated, formally or informally in any form for the advancement of human endeavours. Ruminating very seriously on the definitions and explanations above, one considers the term 'Information' as a sine-qua-none of the general development of the community or the nation as a whole, and also the groups of identifiable individuals within it. "Information to the Western world or Nations, at a time, are being taken in a wider sense such that they were quickly persuaded to take the factor very seriously as they realized that the bulk of their forward matching progression and their very positive survival depended to a large extent on information, so much so that they began to speak of the dire consequences of ignoring this fact in apocalyptic terms" [2].

The fact remains that there is no human endeavour that is not information driven. Even, there is no nation, no community, no people; group or individual that can stand out of the fact to conclude that information is not a catalyst to development, anyone who thinks otherwise will be perpetually retarded, continue to retrogress and remain a dwarf amidst the progressing giants. Against the foregoing phenomenon therefore, only those who know the importance of information and are willing to harvest its benefits and appropriate same for sustainable growth and development will receive the positive results. It is becoming a reality that no Country, whichever segment of the globe, can limit her growth to only the economy, to develop her people. The human centred development approach is now the vogue. The realization that human development is strictly tied to the health of a nation is a paradigm shift that can no longer be considered in isolation of Information generation or be ignored in totality.

## 2. Conceptualization of Democratic Culture in the Nigeria Standard

Democracy has become the most popular form of political philosophy and political practices now controlling with maximum confidentiality and power of position occupancy. Democracy has seriously become an irresistible political tide which normally becomes strong and grows stronger as long as there are selfless individuals wanting to stand by the tenets of the system. Democracy has become the secret for peace and development. All peaceful and developed or progressed Countries of the world are democratic and the worth of human persons therein is appreciated and is usually accorded the well-deserved and full respect. More importantly, it is only when a government is in total pursuit of the wishes of the people that it can be called or referred to as democratic. Equally, it is only when

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Bolarinwa, J.A. is a registered practicing academic librarian at the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Library, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. [jabolaav212@gmail.com](mailto:jabolaav212@gmail.com)  
 Olorunfemi, D.Y. is a registered practicing librarian at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. [doreenolorunfemi1@gmail.com](mailto:doreenolorunfemi1@gmail.com)

the instrument that places a group of people into position, through their votes, in a more legitimate process during democratic election which must be free, fair and devoid of rancour and violence. Lack of such qualities or denial of same would make the people ungovernable. Based on the foregoing therefore, one is forced to ask "What then is Democracy?"

### 2.1. Democracy

[3] described democracy as "a fundamental right, an engine of liberation and a catalyst agent of human development". Further he adds that – "Democratization must involve not only the free and unfettered exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, association and political choice, but also the ability of all citizens to participate in the process of national governance". This is to say that the govern and the governed must be actively involved legitimately in this process in its entirety. Democracy in the real sense of its application is a form of government in which every citizen in a (state) nation has political investments of political participation and trust. A well designed democratic government is naturally marked by continuous dialogue and interaction between those who govern and the governed. Democracy should be seen by implication and application, as an aspect of governance where all secrets of the government are being kept only to be exposed and developed for the governed just because it requires the participation and involvement of the people in decision making since it is based on equal representation on the assumption that all people must be involved in determining what is good for them, how they are governed and the process. Democracy should entail the relatively equal capability of all citizens to influence the allocations of values as they affect their well-being. In democracy, all groups of people and individuals within a geographically defined entity; no matter the social and political status and inclination, are accountable before the law. No one is entitled to a special legal privilege; unless under forceful aberration of judiciary process, the law under this disposition is supposed to be no respecter of persons. The natural rights of the individuals must be respected and protected in all ramifications by the people and the government. [4] accounts for democracy in a more practical sense when he sees democracy "as a form of government in which the power to make decisions or select public officials is granted to all adult citizens on majority rule, and on which, having ascertained the peoples preferences, public officials must then put the decisions to effect, whether they approve or not". It goes further therefore to agree that civil rights and individual liberties are important ingredients of democracy. Such ingredients include the right to the freedom of expression and of the press. The big question – "when shall this be allowed to be? One thing that is germane to this discussion is the freedom of the press, because it is this big freedom that protects other freedoms through the dissemination of information for their survival. This is the only way by which information can get to everyone. Considering the importance of information in this realm therefore, it must be considered with a wide range of publicity and documentation since human rights practices are a deterrent against human rights abuse. Summarizing the elements of democracy, [3] itemized the following:

- Freedom of choice
- Freedom of ignorance or want
- Empowerment capability to belong
- Respect for the rule of law
- Equality before the law
- Promotion and defence of human rights
- Creation of appropriate political machinery
- Sustained political communication to create truth and confidence among leaders and the populace
- Accountability of leadership to the followership
- Decentralization of the political power and authority with equal representation
- Periodic and orderly succession through secret ballot ....

In spite of all these elements, it remains a big fact that democratic culture is subsumed under political culture which evolves through a process of comparing different political orientations and merging similar political behaviour to get generalized or universalized democratic standards which encompass the political elements. Actually, the character of the permissive nature of democracy and the tolerance of opposition must therefore be allowed to subsist.

### 2. The Role of Information in the Decision Making Process

The Pertinent Million Dollars' worth question to be addressed by this paper is – "How does the provision of information and its utilization rhyme with the importance of Democratization process and how are Librarians, Information brokers and political operators going to bail the nations out?" [5] stressing what led to taking the decision of the development of American Research Libraries (ARL), he submits that, "the new availability of printed information and the reliance on them as a significant intellectual resource, led drastically to the development of American Research Libraries." He equally justified that the emergence of ARL in no distant time to its development marked the beginning of the proliferation of unparalleled development in both social and political realms. The foregoing notwithstanding, information has in several fora been generally identified as one of the principal resources required for the improvement and sustenance of any social settings, because information provides a collaboration of data necessary for decisionmaking and shaping of the results arising from the decision earlier made. [6] and [7] in their separate works accorded a high degree of importance to the information provision and utilization whether the affected individual or group is (are) literate or not, whether they need information to take decision or not, whether they are building or using traditional experience only or not, it goes adequately well with all the authorities that every sector of the society needs information. Policy makers, politicians, ordinary man in the street, farmers and all shades of occupation etc., are primarily responsible for generating information and are as well information thirsty in order to produce same. The interpretation of the foregoing therefore is to be able to generate information, one needs acquisition of other information. A remarkable expression released by [8] shows that the information from the media, empowers government and enhances citizens to participate actively in order to

make informed choices and influences government's decision as well. Also, it reveals that the information in the same media serves to check the excesses of elected representatives in order to uphold their oath of office and act based on the wishes of electorate. The solution to the crises of National development whether in the developed or underdeveloped world are many, the roles of information intervention are paramount and very essential. The perspective at which various people, community, state or nation embrace democracy is hinged on the level of information acquired and it speaks volume on the quality of all the people therein. Information helps individual to be assured of their political rights and the expectation of their entitlements and ability to know that these rights are always guaranteed. Such rights as – right to participate in the running and enjoying the economic values of the nation like every other person, the right to be protected, the right for survival, the legitimacy of individual to partake in the day-to-day activity of the government etc. [9] include – political equality, majority rule, and popular consultation, among others. Further he indicates the popular sovereignty, the consent of the governed, political equality, the right to reap the dividends of democracy, to be empowered by the generally accepted constitution, to be able to compete for political position, power to influence others, equal ability and opportunity, free of course, to discuss, constant watchfulness of the general development going on in the state called THE FEDERATION. It is no exaggeration therefore to conclude that democracy can only flourish in an environment filled with information, where the generality of the people have access to the right type of information they require at any given situation, be it information generated by mass media, public institutions such as the Libraries, information centres and private information brokers who provide information for money or free. The old adage – “knowledge is power” is no longer fashionable in isolation. The ‘POWER’ has pitched its tent from the circle of “knowledge” and wisely associates itself with information and has therefore become a super power thereby changing the slogan or adage to become – “INFORMATION IS KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE IS POWER”. As one fully get prepared not to quickly forget that the industrial age which is fast giving way, especially from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to a more complex world where development is being driven, not by factories, but by knowledge and information, it should therefore be borne out that ignorance still pervade all over the society due to illiteracy and lack of Information. It is now becoming an easy thing for the few clever people to deceive the mass populace of illiterates and cheat on them especially of their rights; on the contrary, it becomes socially impossible to cheat or deceive the community of literates where information flourish and spread easily like wildfire during harmattan. This calls for why everybody must, by all means, be educated to cultivate habit of seeking information through the use of books, documents and other known sources of information. The social media (social networking) are a means of the liberalization of the media milieu by ICT that has been getting the politicians' patronage perhaps because of the dominant presence of the voting public [10]. In a participatory democracy, one does not need to wait for information to fall on his lap, people have to be information seekers and users rather

than an idle stone-like-individual who grows no further in life to develop self or influence his environment positively. The dynamism in our approaches to life situation must be taken with all seriousness. With special regard to the new information technologies, there is the need to train people to use them. If there is anyone who, by stroke of ill-luck, shies away the responsibility of utilizing these new technologies, in the later part of this century, such a person will automatically be grouped among the illiterates and the level of social interaction will surely be retarded or such a person will perpetually remain a dwarf for a long time. Professional information brokers argued that the Library can only be socially effective in the drive to make people become literate and information thirst, only if its operators derive from the libraries the well-deserved information and are able to harmonize the effects it has on the people, bearing in mind that it is the social structure that determines how knowledge is translated into action. The Librarians and professional resource persons must include the understanding of the processes of intellectual democratically values and interrelationships of academic knowledge into political motivated principles within the complex social organization. [11] in one of his works concluded inter alia: “American interest groups in Washington DC now spend more time gathering information from government that is relevant to their organizations' interest (e.g. changes in rules and laws) than they do providing information that might influence government policy”. Aiyepoku [12] study on Information utilization by policy makers in Nigeria showed a sharp contrast to that of America. He submits that “Nigerians public policy makers did not have a high level of Information consciousness, though some of them had an appropriate perception of the roles of information in an operational context. These same people only focus on information captured in Journals and current development plans and neglect the foundations of these current developments embedded in textbooks”. The foregoing in Nigeria standard translates to why majority of the policy makers had no idea and values to support the planned programmes, implementation, monitoring and formulation or rejection of ideas on a platform of independency.

### 3. Recommendations

Placing development at the back of our mind, one can naturally recommend without hesitation, that Public Librarians and Information Centres must focus critically on the following:

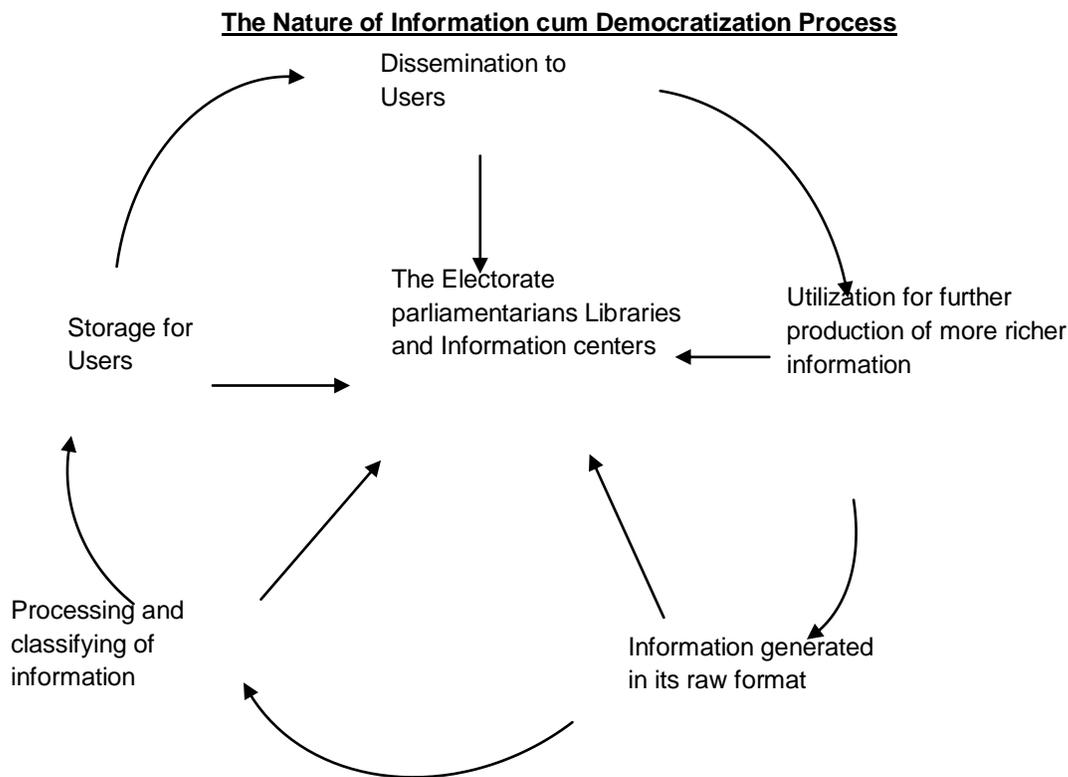
- (a) There should be well standardized Public Libraries, well stocked with information materials on democratization process. The Libraries so established should as a matter of professionalism move away from traditional approach to a more proactive information gathering, storing and dissemination programme policies.
- (b) The information delivery system that is more assertive and outward or forward looking should be put in place while the operators of the system should not wait to be asked for the progressive information first; rather they should have a drive for the anticipation of

- (c) demands and they must deliver them in a more appropriate manner. There should be a monitoring team working in terms of intermediaries between the members of the parliaments, the custodian of the information (Librarians) and the public. The team should find out what are being debated in the floor of the house, the reaction of the public and the operators and or the custodian of information. The information provider and legislatures as well as the public must be wedged together to move the society forward.
- (d) Research works, reports and policy documents should be made available by Public Librarians to both the legislatures and the electorates – the public. Such papers and reports should be those that are development oriented, such as reports of commissions of enquiries, project evaluations, consultancy reports and moreover, the case studies.

- (e) There should be a connectivity networking between the National Assembly, University Librarians, the Information Centres, Ministerial Libraries and Attorney General Chambers Libraries.
- (f) More importantly, a data base should be established to accommodate the myriad of information procured so as to keep the Library's catalogue, information index, newspapers, Journals, periodicals index, parliamentary bills index etc. The service should be made to meet the demands of the parliamentarians and the electorates, such information centres should as a matter of fact provide free access for the public.

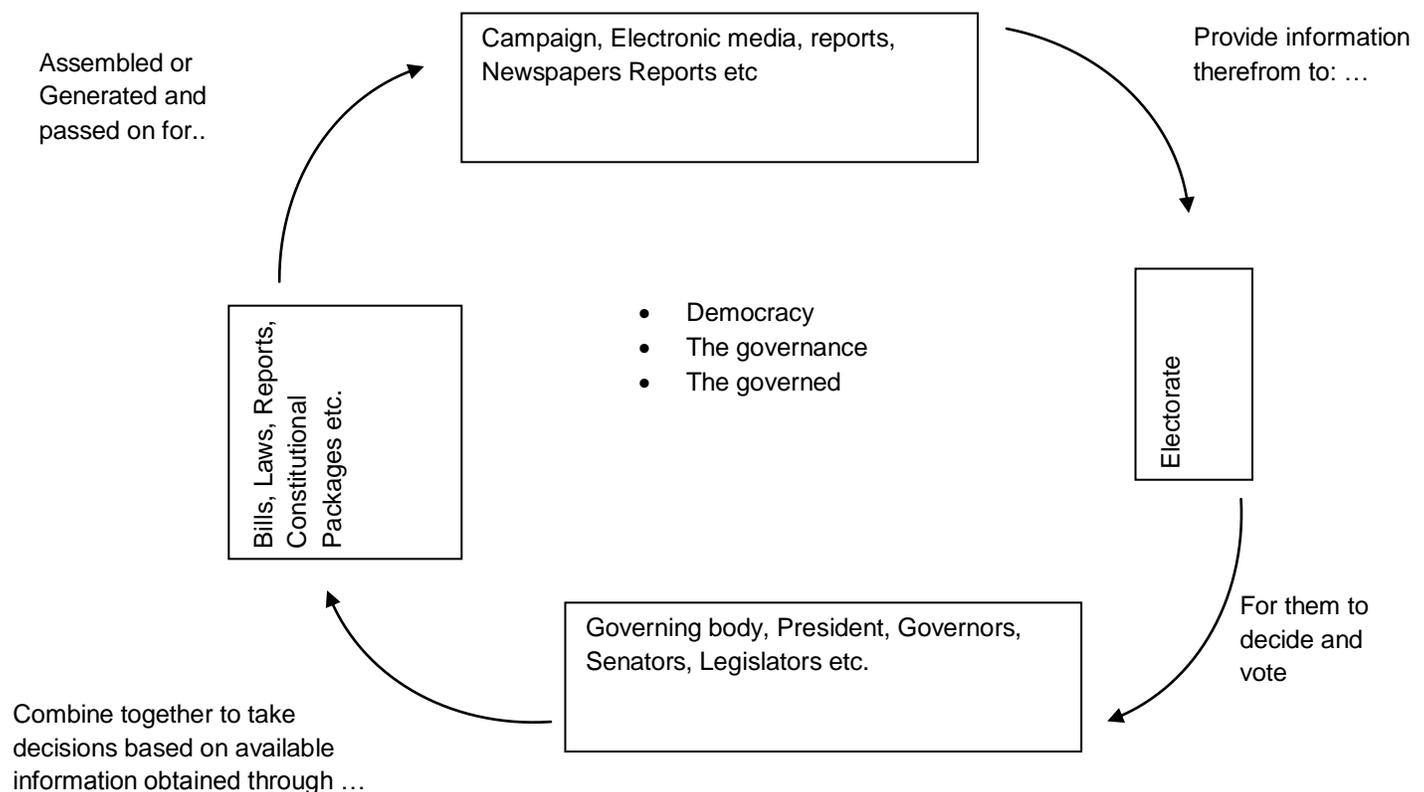
**4. Conclusion**

Information generation, collection, storage, dissemination and utilization should be seen in form of a circle, in other words, it is cyclic in nature, by implication and application.



The diagram above goes well to describe that the much talked about information is a collective responsibility and must be seen as such in practice.

### The Demographic Information and Decision Generation Model (DIDGM)



Adequate information is very necessary if the right democratic culture is to be obtained and sustained.

The above model as graphically presented shows clearly that information is at every stage of the model needed. It goes further to explain that the amount of information supplied or obtained will influence the output which will eventually translate into the next stage in the model. Placing premium to the importance of information at the level of Democratic dispensation and application therefore, the Libraries, Research Centres and Information Centres should be a thing of necessity as appropriate reservoir of the well framed information documentations. There should also be the latest development in Information Communication Technologies in the Libraries to give room for simple retrieving system. On the foregoing, government should be ready to strengthen the development of libraries. In the final analysis, Libraries, Public Libraries for instance, should acquire ready-made and current information and make same available to identified groups of users. For decision makers to make the right decisions at the right time, necessary connectivity, appropriate data base, online public access catalogue, functional library software etc. should be provided and made available for use.

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