

Review

The library's role in developing information literacy and societal growth

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Information is the bedrock of knowledge development and is expected to achieve societal growth. One of the most obvious trends in recent times has been the rapid growth of information that changes the economy and its attendant structures. Over the years, the developing countries are still not able to match up with this global phenomenon. Lifestyles in most of the developing world have continued to deteriorate simply because of the insensitivity of the government to citizens' plight. Many people are walloping in abject poverty, debt crises, communal violence, diseases, food shortage and malnutrition, etc. This study focused on the library's role in developing information literacy and societal growth. Knowledge acquisition, preservation, access to information and dissemination always enhanced development and will continue to change the way people seek and use information. The study, therefore, concluded that the application of IT in all sectors of the economy will encourage self sufficiency in food production, good health and rapid development among the citizenry.

Key words: Library, information literacy, societal growth, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The library is a service delivery institutions, a custodian of knowledge and a center for information dissemination. Traditionally, the library is a place where books are acquiring, store and retrieve for use and such information if well applied could modify user's behaviour. Hence, encourages a more civilized and developed society. According to Obajemo (2002), a good library is indispensable if academic excellence is to be achieved. Knowledge preservation and dissemination have rapidly changed the way people seek and use information. The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which has not only changed the

way information is generated, stored, organized and distributed, but more extensively have become essential tools for teaching, learning and research. Before, access to holdings in the library is simply through the print format, but today electronic resources are procured for quick service delivery and help to meet the information needs of individuals. The library plays a vital role in enabling users to develop information literacy that may likely change individuals attitude towards living, and if access to such information is well managed. Gawith (2000) said that to be information literate, is to be able to find, read, analyze, interpret and apply information to

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build and communicate knowledge effectively. American Library Association (1989) identified information literate as a person who is able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluates and uses effectively the needed information.

Libraries today are changing their way of service delivery and most recent libraries are termed as Digital Libraries or Hybrid Libraries which uses electronic devices. Hence, with a fingernail tip, you can communicate with others globally without any structural or geographical barriers. The digital or electronic resources are dynamic in nature to share information globally and there has been an increased scope for automated delivery mechanism. The advent of ICT constitutes an increasing significant element in the exchange of ideas, making information accessible, easier and faster, to accelerate, enrich and deepen basic knowledge, to add vitality to both research, learning and teaching, enhance the process of intellectual delivery, experience and new knowledge among peers around the world. Not only that, it has the ability to restructuring, re-engineering and developing the society for better living.

SOCIETAL GROWTH

Naturally, the geographic, socio-cultural, economic and political ideologies of people living in Nigeria are different. However community development is a participatory process that must be appropriated by all components of people living in that community. Societal growth encompasses using the state apparatus to enhance development. In contrary, and rightly captured by Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2014:21):

that Nigeria is a country marked by extreme social and economic paradoxes. It is rich in material wealth, but large swathes of its people are poor, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown remarkably but its citizen suffers poor quality of life. It is a major producer of crude oil, with huge reserves of mineral and agricultural resources, the base for industry, but Nigeria's manufacturing sector contributes little to its wealth. Nigeria is rich in human capital, but it has the least endogenous technological capacity. This country should boast very high living standards, but rather its infrastructure is poorly developed and inequality is proportionally higher. It has huge potential for absorbing large skilled and knowledgeable workforce, but unemployment among the youth is unacceptably high. The promise at independent was that of prosperity, but it has long been replaced with befuddling despair that characterized fragile states.

Studies by Kanczak and Szoltysick (2006) described society as a place in which information is intensely used to support economic, social, cultural and political life; it is a society with the abundant means of communication and

of information processing, the society that is serving as a major part of the national income and ensuring contribution to the source of income for the majority of the population. Societal development can also be seen as the process by which people recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choice and values (Ake, 2001). However, scholars have identified information communication mismanagement as one of the major factors that underdeveloped Africa; they are not favourably attuned to information sources that could be beneficial to them simply because the facilities to tap this information are not available. Although, a small number of significant factors are noticed in the area of trade, economic and educational sectors and others, but the application of ICTs could be used as a medium to establish networks between members or the outside world to improve the institutional context of these communities. There is a need to fully involve the stakeholders of the society which I regarded as farmers, students, academia's and policy makers/administrators. An adequate provision of infrastructural facilities, a standardised library will surely encourage accessibility and use of information sources to hasten the transformation of the Nigerian socio-economic system and develop it to those driven by the forces of highly networked information technology.

Statement of the problem

There was a report of gradual decline in research output in higher education which became noticeable in the late 1980s. This may adversely affect any meaningful development in every sector of the economy. Before then, the National Universities Commission (NUC) noted that, in terms of quality and quantity Nigerian research output was the best in sub-Saharan Africa. This achievement was recorded based on good research training, motivation, and availability of equipment and good library facilities that encouraged service delivery. Unfortunately, this is no longer true of the nation's universities as quality and quantity of research have declined to all-time low and adversely discouraged greater output in every sector of the economy (Okebukola and Solowu, 2001). Summarising the factors that contributed to this decline, Okebukola (2002) identifies the following:

1. Lack of research skills in modern methods.
2. Lack of equipment for carrying out state-of-the art research.
3. Overloaded teaching and administration schedules which leave little time for research
4. Difficulty in accessing research funds.
5. Diminishing ability of seasoned and senior researchers to mentor junior researchers due to brain drain.

These poor performances continue to generate much

concern among lecturers, government and other stakeholders in the educational sector. The low productivity is likely caused by some factors such as inadequate infrastructural facilities, insufficient Internet facilities, low level of information literacy and communication technology development, insufficient research training (local and international), obsolete materials in the library and financial constraints, among others. These identified factors constitute a bottleneck for research breakthrough that may enhance societal growth. High level productivity entails full commitment and this comes basically when the zeal and determination to succeed is embedded in individuals and when the environment encourages such development.

THE WAY FORWARD TOWARDS SOCIETAL GROWTH

1. Through Information literacy
2. Application of mechanized farming
3. Through acquisition of knowledge (students)
4. Researchers as knowledge disseminators
5. Policy makers/administrators
6. The role of the library

Through information literacy

Any societal transformation has to be through large scale development and this greatly depends on knowledge creation, access to information and exchange of ideas globally. Information literacy is the embodiments of high level of information awareness by individual and use to better their life. It is obvious that users of information resources must possess requisite skills in order to harness information resources at their disposal. UNESCO's Information For All Programme (IFAP, 2008:25) has defined Information Literacy as:

the capacity of people to recognise their information needs, locate and evaluate the quality store and retrieve information, make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge. The scope of Information Literacy includes computer literacy, technology literacy, information technology literacy, internet literacy, digital literacy, media literacy and more.

In addition, Doyle (2001) describes an information literate person as one who recognises the need for information; accurate and complete information as a basis for intelligent decision making; formulate questions based on the information needs; identifies potential sources of information; accesses sources of information, including computer and other technologies; evaluate information; organizes information to integrate new information; information existing body of knowledge and practical application; and uses of information in critical thinking and problem solving. Information literacy enables people

to interpret and make informed judgments. It is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society and part of the basic human rights of lifelong learning. In highlighting the importance of information literacy in higher education, Dadzie (2009) stated that some fresh students entering university and colleges have limited knowledge of fundamental research and information competency skill and may not have learn how to locate information or how to use it in original work and give proper credit for the information used. University libraries should thus involved in the teaching and learning process to guide and enable students improve their information literacy skills, a potential weapon for future assurance.

In summary, information literacy is assumed to be the knowledge and skills necessary to correctly identify information needed to perform a specific task or unravel a problem, proficiently search for information, organize or reorganize it, interpret and advice on it once it is found and retrieved (e.g. downloaded), evaluate the accuracy and consistency of the information, including morally acknowledging the sources from whence it was obtained, communicated and presented. Modern civilization has witnessed three great revolutions. The Industrial Revolution sustained society for over a century. Then, Information Revolution took over that leads to the emergence of the Information Society. Today, the societies are moving towards the Knowledge base wherein knowledge has become the leading driving force of the economy and a tool for overall development. The convergence of computers and telecommunication after about four decades of applying computers to routine data processing mainly information storage and retrieval has created development epoch where information has become the engine for economic growth in the world. Having knowledge of information needed and duly applied tends to change people's behaviour while information literacy acquisition will help information seekers to achieve their goals.

The study by Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani (2005) asserted that the real challenge of our time is not producing or storing information, but effectively use information resources for development. Information users must learn to overcome information anxiety in order to explore the available information to enable them interprets and utilised information for rational decision making.

The global advancement in technology in recent years has given telecommunication a prime place in the structure of world infrastructure and development.

Information availability, utilisation, and the increasingly global communications environment have changed the productivity level of the employees and encouraged high level achievement if properly harnessed and effectively used.

APPLICATION OF MECHANISED FARMING

Agriculture generally provides food for teeming population

and mainly depends on subsistence farming system which could only sustain their immediate household. Basically, mechanised farming encourages large food productions and industrial development and having access to relevant information will also encourage high level productivity. Historically, the Nigerian economy has depended on its agricultural sector to provide employment and livelihood for the vast majority of its people. In the early 1960's, the basis of Nigerian economy was a well diversified agricultural sector that supported 75% of the population, provided 68% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 78% of exports. It also supplied 94% of the staple food needed to feed the population. Moreso, estimated per capital income stood at US \$90 and the GDP at an annual rate nearly 5% (World Bank, 1996). Despite the oil-boom in the early 1970s, agriculture has retained its role as a major source of economic growth and development in Nigeria (Oji-Okoro, 2011). However, this laudable achievement recorded in the early 60s and 70s not endure given the recent report of the World Bank (2011) that agriculture has contributed little to the economic growth of the nation in the past 15 years. This is because the government shifted its attention to the oil sector. Manyong et al. (2005) observe that the decline in the agricultural sector to support the economic growth of the nation has been a problem for poverty reduction and high level productivity. However, the major problems of agricultural development in developing countries like Nigeria includes inadequate financing, lack of rural infrastructures, inadequate and late supply of farm inputs, problems of pests and diseases, inadequate tools and machinery, unpredictable climate, inconsistent agricultural policy and agricultural degradation. Many agricultural research institutes were established to address these problems that confront farmers in crop production, livestock farming, forestry or fish production and improvement with a view to make a Nigerian self-sufficient in its food requirement. Researchers strive to develop new farming techniques, farming systems and management practices for increased crop and animal production, so that Nigeria can achieve food security. Basically, agriculture depends largely on the amount of scientific information accessible to farmers or agricultural scientists. The application of modern information technology such as Internet, discussion groups, chat groups, e-mail, Facebook, twitter, blogs, YouTube is new channels of communication that could improve farmers' orientation towards the economic growth of the nation. The subsistence farmers who are predominantly illiterate could be trained on how they could apply this new mechanised technology to better the production output.

THROUGH ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE (STUDENTS)

The Nigerian students (our future leaders) need information on knowledge acquisition and retrieval. To ensure

that the country is well positioned for this knowledge society, not minding the infrastructure facilities that have continually declined higher education is expected to increase enrollments in the ICT fields of study to encourage development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). For instance, Minishi-Manjaja (2007) stated that in South Africa government recognizes that ICT, human resource development is the key to the accomplishment of the ideals of the information age and better society.

In a speech delivered in the University of Lagos, Mass Communication (2013), Professor Ruqqayyat Ahmed Rufai, the former Minister of Education rightly observed that education vis-à-vis research productivity is a powerful weapon that could bring a change in the society. According to Ruqqayyat Ahmed Rufai (2013):

For most nations, higher education is today defining the pace of economic advancement, scientific progress, social development and national integration. Our universities must align with our national goals and aspiration and brace up to the challenges of knowledge based competition. You must strive to be creative in your approach to contemporary problem solving”.

Undoubtedly, education is the backbone for human advancement in life. Education is a sound knowledge acquired for good value and societal growth. The ability of the child to read and develop the reading interest with the use of a library resource is a sine-qua-non- for achieving emotional stability, and for keeping abreast of what is happening in his immediate environment and the world at large. Access to library resources are so crucial to the overall intellectual, psychological development of the child while the agencies of educational developers, namely teachers, publishers, author's, parents and librarians must collectively be actively involved in the development of reading interest among the students to ensure that it becomes a lifelong legacy of the child (Gbaje, 2008). It has been discovered that reading interest among students is not encouraging and access to library resources is very minimal due to some difficulty they encounter in locating the resources and this may likely be an obstacle that discourage reading. The use of school library resources is to promote active learning and reading interest in order to contribute meaningfully to the community growth. Therefore, the responsibility of promoting and sustaining the reading interest of students must be vigorously pursued through the provision of material resources in Nigerian libraries.

RESEARCHERS AS KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATORS

Societal growth is encouraged when there is a formidable research. Research entails a lot of effort that could provide a solution to economic problems facing the developing countries, particularly in the area of poverty reduction and the quality of educational development in

Nigeria. Basse et al. (2007) affirmed that the importance of research cannot be overlooked in the university environment and is regarded as a major or most significant indicator of academic staff productivity. It leads to generation of new knowledge, encourages innovations, enhances the quality of teaching, increases an institution's reputation and its economic status (Sulo et al., 2012). Globally, the advancement of scientific knowledge is mainly the responsibility of the university lecturers. Scholarly or scientific publications are the life blood of science and development (Hofman et al., 2009). Uthman and Uthman, (2007) stated that scholarly publications play an important role in scientific process by providing a key linkage between knowledge production and use. They are vital for knowledge sharing, dissemination of research findings and career advancement of academics. The main objective of the library is educational, where knowledge stored are retrieved for proper use, therefore, it is important that the library expands according to the evolving new trends of Information Technology (IT) and the trained professional(s) should augment the library services delivery effectively.

POLICY MAKERS/ADMINISTRATORS

Information is a tool to run the affairs of the state. To further encourage access to information, the light of Information Bill 2002 was passed by Nigerian lawmakers. Not only that, an enabling working environment will surely encourage development and tends to expedite action on individual to persist in pursuing their objectives. In view of this, lecturers in Nigerian universities through their union, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have persistently agitated for adequate funding of universities and good remuneration for its members. Stable funding would promote job security and checkmate successive waves of brain-drains in the academia. There is need to give attention to the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies on funding of higher institutions particularly agricultural research institutes. Policy makers must ensure that scientists are adequately motivated to be able to use their experience, intelligence and manipulative skills to solve societal problems through their research findings and recommendations. Policy makers must enact laws that will encourage huge investments by individual and corporate bodies geared towards enhancing development in Nigeria. To support government in achieving development professional librarians should endeavour to predict, grasp, analyse and provide relevant information for individual's use.

The role of the library

The role of the librarian is to collect, repackage and disseminate information for societal growth. The rapid

increase in the application of computers, the Internet, electronic resources, mobile devices, databases and the World Wide Web in all aspects of human activities and most importantly the educational sector. Information processing and retrieval has become a very promising and vital component of the enabling structure for societal growth and individual's career development. This could as well be supported by university libraries in the areas of knowledge acquisition and dissemination, even though some scholars (Emmojoroh, 2005; Opara, 2008) have observed that the libraries are also confronted with numerous problems. These include declining financial support, inadequate infrastructure facilities, low levels of information technology development, obsolete materials and limited access to a variety of information in the form of stored data. Nevertheless, these libraries have a role to play by creating interfaces with the global knowledge system, tailored towards institutions and individual research developments. Adequate provision of infrastructural facilities that will encourage accessibility and use of information sources in order to hasten the transformation of the Nigerian educational system from the traditional method of teaching, learning, and research, and develop it to those driven by the forces of highly networked information technology. Accessibility encourages utilisation of information when tools to access such information are readily available. The world information structure is constantly changing and requires humans being to keep up with this development, gaining and using it persistently has become indispensable for one's social and professional development. Although, access to information itself is not total assurance for societal development expect other machinery needed for growth were on ground. The crucial factors is being well acquainted with and skillfully existing in the ocean of information which means searching for adequate sources, selecting and evaluating information as well as having the ability to transform it into knowledge. Access is determined by a combination of the availability of telecommunication infrastructure and the accessibility and affordability of Internet services. Hence, today accessibility of information is very essential for knowledge accumulation. However, accessibility is much more relevant than availability. Accessibility is about being able to use what is available when it is required. It is also hypothesized that accessibility to information networks worldwide influences the use of resources. Having knowledge of what is there with no means of obtaining it or having information technology without knowledge of how to use it does not constitute access. No doubt, the availability and accessibility of information resources will aid greater productivity.

Conclusion

The goal of self sustaining growth and structural

transformation of a nation depends on modernization of agricultural production, information awareness and use, knowledge acquisition and retrievals, formidable research and encouragement of access to valuable information by the people. The infusion of information technology into all sectors of socio-economic and utilization by individuals could reverse the underdevelopment the African countries are facing today. It is anticipated that Nigerian policy makers will give valuable insight and overhaul the infrastructural facilities to foster development and a better living. Hence, today accessibility of information is very essential for knowledge accumulation. The libraries have a role to play by creating interfaces with the global knowledge system and geared towards enhancing societal growth.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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