Developing An Informed, Educated And Empowered Citizenry: The Role Of Libraries, Librarians And Educators

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Abstract. Information is at the core of education and that it has a democratic, liberatory power that will give all members of the society the equality of access to the society's power. We find ourselves in a rapidly growing and complex digital environment which has in turn increased our dependence on information. Modern society can develop if people acquire competencies of a reasonable and responsible handling of new technologies. The libraries, librarians, and educators have important role to play in this context. Providing the right information to the right persons at the right time is the key to the success of any in institution. Information literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. Information literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments and decisions as users of information sources and to become producers of information in their own right too. Transforming all levels of education and moving beyond the boundaries of information literacy as a library only issue, librarians, educators, and administrators must continue to develop tools of collaboration and communication about information literacy in the context of teaching, learning and research. This is the thrust of this paper.
Keywords: Information literacy, Libraries, Librarians, Educators, Empowerment, Informed citizenry

1. Introduction

Information is a basic human right and is absolutely important in the development of any society. It is an essential resource without which an individual or a nation cannot make progress. Information is a measure of one's freedom of choice when one selects a message. People need information in order to reduce the ambiguity of their environment and that they use information impose some structure on the unstructured events. Information as a term is used in wide variety of ways by different people in different disciplines in order to allow them make a particular case as they seek to advance understanding of their discipline in a broader field of knowledge Information adds some new

structure to the existing knowledge base of the recipient. This added new structure is capable of changing the existing knowledge structure of the of the recipient (Abdulsalami, Okezie and Agbo, 2013)

When one is informed, his cognitive structure is reshaped or altered as a result of an external stimulus that changes our existing knowledge about any phenomenon. Information is the communication of ideas, facts meant to be used to achieve some goals. Abdulsalami Okezie & Agbo (2013) citing Garfield, view information as facts, ideas and knowledge conveyed by any available means to individual, groups of individuals or society for enlightenment education and behavioral change.

Information is knowledge and knowledge is power. It is worthy of note that the level of growth and development of an individual or nation or systems are largely associated with relevant information available to the individuals, nation or system. Nigeria was rated among the poorest countries of the world in term of human development (UNPP Report, 2014). One of the criteria used in the assessment is knowledge, that is, the level of adult literacy. Developed countries such as USA, Britain, France, Japan etc spend a fortune is putting their resources on information system but developing nations do not realize the importance of such information.

Education empowers citizens with tools and resources to reduce inequalities of all types. No educational system can be considered adequate without an effective and efficient library and information service. Libraries provide knowledge resources which enable users to be creative participants in the development drive of their nation. Academic and school libraries provide information and knowledge to extend the learning process of institutions of learning, while special libraries make information available to business organization to enable them forcast market, develop new products or adapt to new technologies; to research institutes to enable them synthesize new data with known facts as parts of creative process; to government agencies for the formulation of plans, policies and refinement of decision process. Therefore, the provision of the right information when and where needed improves the ability of an individual, a business a government agency or some either kind of organizational to make informed decision (Aguolu (1989), cited in Opara (2017). Thus the greatest empowerment of the citizen is the empowerment of the intellect which generate positive ideas and makes the society a better place by great ideas. The library is globally recognized as the purveyor of authentic information and development of a nation. National development as a conscious effort by knowledgeable, well informed and focused citizenry. It is about the people by the people and for the people. Any nation that wants to develop needs to provide adequate library and information structure in order to build the capacity of its citizenry who bring about development. The library contributes in bringing about progress in the society by providing resources which enrich the users' mental vision and dignifies theirs habit, character, taste, attitude, conduct,

and perception of life (Opara, 2017). Libraries are needed as tools are for the acquisition of information and knowledge delivery. It is the only major means to accede to information and information that is not shared adequately cannot communicate the desired knowledge.

2. Access To Information

Information has to be made available to users. Access to information ensures access to all authority and information sources ranging from both point and electronic sources. Access to information means unlimited access to all the citizens which affect the interest of the citizenry. It also refers to the means and mode through which information is made available by providing entire range of possibilities for making information and information services available to the available to the public. Access to information is a fundamental human right that can break the cycle of poverty and support sustainable development. The library is the only place in many countries where people can access information that will help improve their education, develop skills, find jobs, build businesses , make informed agricultural and health decision or gain insights into environmental issues (IFLA). The Lyon Declaration states that access to information supports development by empowering people to:

- Exercise their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,
- Learn and apply new skills,
- Make decision and participate in an active and engaged civil society,
- Create community – based solutions to development Challenges,
- Ensure accountability, transparency, good governance and empowerment
- Measure process on public and private commitments on sustainable development (IFLA,2017).

Access to information is important as every individual needs information to develop his/her potentials through education and training to succeed in business, to enrich their cultural experience and take control of their daily lives. Access to information is an essential element of this modern electronic society, where the citizens are expected to access information at any point in time. It is very important as it accelerates the level of individual achievement as well as corporate educational development. It focuses on the right of individual to have access to the information at the right time (Oyeronke, cited in Abdulsalami, et al (2013). With the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTS), the internet has developed as another mode of accessing information which has helped to overcome the inequality of information in the society. It is a meduim to explore for anyone involved in processing, disseminating and retrieving information easily. With ICT, libraries can provide the right information for users, in the right form and at the right time (Orakpor, 2017). ICT has changed the means of accessing information. Users now go to the library to have internet access with the explosion of information more

information is in the electronic format and are accessed anywhere and at any time through the internet ; thus making access to information easy and fast.

3. Empowerment

Empowerment is a process that makes it possible for people who are disempowered to exercise power and have more control over their lives. This means having a greater voice in institutions, agencies and situations which affect them. Infact, when people have access to information which potentials for democratic, social and political actions, they are said to be empowered, Empowerment is associated with authority, giving the means to, emancipation, setting free, indicate the intimate ideas for an informed, educated and empowered citizenry words associated with information and educated citizenry and empowerment can also shed light an the issues to consider when working towards this and taking a holistic view, such words as Moratoria (2011), Maswabi, Sethate, Sebusang & Tuola 2011) put it include, open, democratic, accountable, prosperous, productive, innovative, educated, informed, moral, tolerant, proud, compassionate, just, caring, safe, an secure.

It is argued that empowerment requires a total change of attitude from all parties involved. It calls for the willingness to empower and to be empowered, and it can only succeed if all parties are committed, positive and motivated. It also calls for true collaboration where all parties work equally for a specific common goal which is to empower the citizenry through the provision of teaching materials and pedagogical methodology, which can help develop the skills and competencies related to the future work requirements of the learner and lifelong learning.

We assume that the education we got have equipped us to be citizens who can participate fully in the society who may be a wrong assumption because we cannot really rely on that research show that middle class students are unable to discern between adds ad new stories, and that high school and college students cannot investigate further the authority and credible sources of evidence found on the web but take them on face value (Wineburg & Nichrew, 2016).

4. Information Literacy Skills

Information literacy as a concept evolved from several basic literacy concepts such as library instruction, bibliographic education, user education and information, and information literacy programmes. Information literacy is important due to the amount of information available in modern society. It is worthy of note that by being exposed to enormous amount of information does make people informed citizens. They need to acquire skills to learn how to use information, information literacy skills are helpful to every citizen in order to carry out their occupation efficiently and successfully. Having information literacy skills enables individuals to become information literate in the society.

An information literate person, according to ACRL (2000) is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed,
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently,
- Evaluate information and its sources critically,
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base,
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose,
- Understand the economics, legal, and societal issues surrounding the use of information, and access information ethically and legally.

Information literacy is the ability to navigate and use digital or online resources in efficient and effective ways. In everyday life people need to useful information for making informed decisions that are of significance value to them in their communities around citizenship, health, and well-being and generally, their overall quality of life. We need information literacy education, now more than ever, so that every person, regardless of political or social view, can benefit from the ability not just to find information in the web but to critically evaluate it. Libraries of all types are called on to take on challenge ranging from information literacy and developing reaching culture as well as contributing to developing informed, education citizenry.

5. Developing Informed, Educated And Empowered Citizenry

Building an informed, educated and empowered citizenry required many things to be addressed, such as literacy, information literacy, adult literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, multi cultural literacy and critical literacy (Morrel, 2010). It also requires collaborative skills, education, healthcare and information literacy, education in ethical issues and cyber security. There is also education in responsible citizenship, addressing emotional intelligence and especially the importance of affect and emotion (Fourie and Julien, 2014).

Developing an informed, educated and empowered citizenry calls for educating nations and for empowerment of individuals. The importance of an educated nation has often been raised with empowerment being the ultimate aim (Hart and Nassimbeni, 2013, Maswabi et al 2011) Fourie and Meyer, 2016, citing Mali, stated that Napoleon Bonaparte once said that of given educated mothers he would transform them into educated nation. A reading nation is an informed nation (Addo, 2014). Strength, power, wealth and richness are some of the benefits noted after for educated nations (Maswabi etal 2011)

Many ways to work towards and to receive global education of nation abound. The most important is making progress, is
1. Recognizing the value of ripple effects: Educated parents can contribute to educated children, improvement in quality of life and lifelong learning (Maswabi et al 2011).

2. Educating library users can make a difference, especially if they are also empowered to make a difference to information literacy training and library user education (Eden & Eden, 2015).

The ultimate aim of an empowered, informed and educated citizenry include learning organizations, learning societies, community of practice, collaborative learning and information seeking ethical conduct under any circumstances, the building of community resilience and health, improved self-efficiency, amongst citizens and those leading the process, and the support for the people to develop and build social capital (Ash- Argyle & Shehain, 2014), Bronstein, 2014, Pootinga, 2012. Libraries, Librarians and other stakeholders contribute to educated, empowered citizenry. This is thrust of this section

6. The Role Of Libraries

From the dawn of civilization to the modern society and ever since the invention of writing paper and the advent of computers, libraries have been preoccupied with the role of preserving information with a vigor and enthusiasm in furthering the cause of academic research and education and catering for the needs of millions of information seekers. Libraries provide services needed by its parent institution. A good library is like a solid rock on which people build their house for self advancement and work for the general good of the community as a whole, and the nation at large. IFLA in its statement on libraries and development affirms that libraries.

- Empower people for their own self development,
- Offer access to the world's knowledge,
- Are part of a multi stakeholder society, and
- Need to be recognized in developing policy frameworks.

Libraries further development by helping individuals to get the information they need to access economic opportunity, gender equality, and quality education, improve their health or develop their countries. All over the world, libraries combine a trusted, local institution with information access that is critically to driving economic opportunity and country development. Libraries are agents of change and as agents of change; they serve to form the individual into a responsible citizen. A well stocked library is an asset to the school, college, university, organization, and to the community where it is situated. It is an unarguable fact that library as play an important role in national development by providing an indispensable ingredient information. This explains the reasons why countries are creating strategies to ensure that information and knowledge are effectively used, shared and made accessible in order to empower people to act as agent of their own development. Information enables people to fight poverty, deprivation, illiteracy.

Libraries promote access to information for all persons and recognize the ongoing need to increase awareness of and responsiveness to the diversity of

communities we serve. They equip learners with variety of resources that help them develop life applicable skills. Libraries contribute to education by offering information, referral services and teaching resources. They offer individual tutorial programmes and educational classes, outreach services to special people's groups with disability too. Their unique role makes libraries important development partners, both by providing access to information in all formats and by delivering services and programmes that meet needs for information in a changing and increasing complex society. As Okiy (2006) asserts, the library is central to the provision of the right type of information resources that empowers the educational institutions to produce high resourceful people to impact positively on national development.

7. The Role Of Librarians

Library is a treasure house of information that employ trained librarians to preserve, systematize and administer, so that they can contribute successfully to the continuing education and self improvement of individuals, providing meaningful assistance to identifying, extracting and disseminating proper information from the enormous resources that abound in its stocks. A researcher or learner will find the expertise of the librarian on specific fields and his ability to narrow down its research for fact but also on the precious time saved.

Librarians face new roles in the computer dominated electronic information environment. Librarians, as change agents are responsible for diffusing the new technology, must bridge the gap between technology and the end users in a manner that enables the end users to effectively and efficiently use technology. In order to accomplish this proactive role, librarians should be conversant with and proficient in their use, providing bibliographic instructions, and assisting patrons in addressing information needs and evaluating the information retrieved. To accomplish these, librarians should not only become custodians of knowledge but also knowledge educators. The rapidly evolving information technology (IT) has changed the ways in which information is stored, presented, retrieved and managed. As a result of these change, librarians need to meek information needs by bridging the gap between new technologies and library users (Callahan, 1991). Librarians, therefore, need to understand and adapt to these innovations (Dority 2006). As a modern librarian's task is to be able to use and distribute information in many formats other than print, he/she should be able to use all media, including digital and social media and bridge the gap between these media and their end users in order for them to use them effectively and efficiently.

Librarians have been called to take on the effective challenge ranging from information literacy and developing reading habits to promoting social justice. They have also been challenged to contribute to the development of informed and educated citizenry, and sometimes even to empower people - an issue in developing countries (Fourie & Meyer, 2016).Librarians is agents of change academically, socially, politically, economically and otherwise. A well stocked,

professionally staffed school library can assist individualized learning and improve the student's performance throughout the curriculum (Akanbi, 2002). Wale (2006) affirmed that librarians have and can develop further skills to support educational innovation and have the opportunity to act as role models within their institutions. They support educational development for all levels of human development. They can easily network to enhance access to information and services through the use of ICT. They work with other library professionals to provide the needed platform and reform for educational systems.

Library professionals all over the world have a crucial role in empowering the citizenry for upward development. Active learning styles foresee the role of librarians as major players in multi disciplinary teams for developing learning environments. Librarians should understand the information practices of the people. Studies in information behavior can reveal the information needs and preferences and various information related activities. They should note differences in information use in generations, changes over time, etc using standard data collection methods to understand information behavior and apply them. Such information will aid them in attempt to develop informed, educated and empowered citizenry.

8. The Role Of Educators And Other Stakeholders

Stakeholders here include administrators, teachers/lecturers, managers (Head librarians), policy makers, etc. Education gives empowerment to citizens with tools and resources to reduce inequality of all types, poverty, deprivation, illiteracy and boost economic power. Information, on the other hand is critical resource which can be provided in a library and information centre. Each stakeholder listed above have a role to play in developing an informed, educated and empowered citizenry.

The role of the teacher must evolve from the giver of knowledge to being a coach, or guides or educators. Teachers must be ready to teach students to become critical thinkers, intellectual curious observers, creators and users of information. This is to equip and prepare students for an independent lifelong learning while utilizing the skills acquired to seek needed information. Educator and researchers must grapple with defining the information literacy, develop new ways to engage learners and measure outcomes and impact such as learning (Ilogho & Nkiko, 2014 Citing Colorado Education Association, 1981).

This new process calls for a departure from the teacher centered learning style to a more inclusive and participating method that tasks students' IL skills. Lack of information is a global phenomenon. Knowledge is power, but knowledge can become power only when we are able to acquire information and effectively utilize it to meet our needs. Therefore, teachers, faculty, librarians, administrators, policy makers and community must collaborate to find ways to involve students not only in using classroom materials but also in using resources from a broader community and the mass media (Barbara, 2002).

There is need for the policy on education to be implemented and for both librarians and teachers to have a working relationship in educating pupils and students. The Nigerian Union of Teachers (N.U.T), Nigerian Association of Educators (NAE) and Nigerian Library Association (NLA) etc should ensure that our educational system is developed to a set standard. Uta (2005) pointed out that infact most professional associations in Africa are by and large seen as lobby channels rather than enforcers of standards. Education will only be complete when all stake holders – teachers, librarians, administrators, policy makers etc come together to set a standard for our education, and both teachers and librarians teach students reading skills while the library enhances individual learning skills. Learning is a lifelong skills and it is only when the individuals are open learn that there is education and this will bring about an informed, educated and empowered citizenry.

9. Conclusion

Access to information is a basic task of the citizen and a pre-condition to the development of community and nation. Access to information and knowledge is the ability for all to contribute information, ideas and knowledge essential in an inclusive society. Sharing and strengthening of global knowledge for development can be enhanced by removing barriers to equitable access to information for economic, social, political, cultural and educational activities, by facilitating access to public domain and use of Internet access. Access to information through libraries empowers every citizen and also embraces the notion of social inclusion as the librarian will become an active change agent in the society.

To ensure that every one is information literate, we need to employ more librarians, training and retraining of existing librarians to acquire the competencies to deal with the digital era. The information field is growing in new ways, bringing forth new roles like information scientists and data scientist IL has been the purview of librarians and is one of the things that delineate librarians from other information professionals (Clarke 2016). More resources should be allocated to those librarians and projects and we really need librarians with new ideas and enthusiasm to design approaches that will bridge the gap between teaching and learning. With the influx of information resources and the changes brought by lCTs, librarians are better equipped to provide assistance to library patrons, teachers, students and community members. Libraries and librarians can easily network to enhance access to information resources and services through the use of ICTs, especially through open access. All stakeholders in education must place their hands on deck to enhance the development of informed, educated as well as empowered citizenry.

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