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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ENHANCING INFORMATION LITERACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Informing and educating the populace is a priority mostly in relation to policies and objectives that involves people. In ensuring that the policies are implemented, individuals, corporate organisation, as well as government devices various medium and tools to educate, inform and enlighten intended people of what is to be brought to them, their involvement and how it affects them. One of such mediums is the public library. The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) describes public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are objectives that are centered on three key areas: environmental, social, and economic, for the betterment of human and the world. The objectives require process and implementations that carries the peoples along. As a medium, the public library fits into the vehicle to drive the SDG.

A public library is an organization established, supported, funded and maintained by the community either through local, regional and national government or through some other form of community organization. Public libraries are places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. The public libraries also provide the services of specialists, who are experts in the matters related to finding and organizing information and interpreting information needs, called librarians. Public libraries with their collections are place where individuals can learn and develop themselves, it provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services, and is usually available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment. According to Tiwari, (2011) every country has its own public library history, with influential leaders.

Public Library Services in Nigeria

The need for self-education, free flow of information, storage of public documents, led to the creation of public libraries in Nigeria. The date of the first public library in Nigeria have so variation form different authors such as Oderinde (1980) and Nnaji (1986). According to Ezekwe and Muokebe (2012), Nigeria got its first experience of pro- library in 1910, when Tom Jones established a subscription library in Lagos.

Elaturoti (2012), supported that the first public library in Nigeria was the Tom Jones library which allowed public readership in the 1920s. Carnegie Corporation of the United State of America supported Nigeria to open another public library at Lagos in 1932, as a subscription library. The library provided light reading fiction, biographies and current affairs for the civil servants in the 1940s. The library was named —Lagos library‖ it was a product from Lagos Book club and financial assistance from the Carnegie Corporation. Public libraries have a wide range of readership and its collections, facilities and services are enjoyed by members of the community. Their services depend on the resources made available by the government. Expatriate civil servants,

professionals and other prominent Nigerians were the patrons of this library. The British council made significant contributions to the development of libraries in Nigeria; as such, the British council established their library in 1943 to serve as an information centre during the Second World War. This was where they held general materials on war literature which were contained in various media such as magazines, newspapers etc. several of such information centre were established in major cities in Nigeria to serve a similar purpose. They were all handed over to the local authorities after the end of the Second World War.

According to Elbert, Fuegi & Lipeikaite (2011) public libraries are uniquely positioned to change lives and build strong communities. In many parts of the world, where access to technology is extremely limited, libraries are often the sole source of access to computers and the internet. Onyenachi (2012) posits that public libraries in Nigeria are largely classified as non-income generating government establishments. It is usually seen as institutions through which government provide free educational and social services to the people. It is envisaged that each state in Nigeria has a public library with a board of management. The board maintains service out-let in towns and Local Government Areas (LGAs) as well as villages to serve the citizens and dwellers in the state. They either called it divisional libraries or services out-lets.

The Role of Public Libraries

After independence, Nigeria experienced growth in population of literate and educated citizens due to various efforts in universalisation of elementary education through programmes like, universal Basic education (UBE), state secondary and education board, state universal education, and so on. Public libraries plays vital role in information literacy by providing effective and efficient use, consumption and evaluation of information resources, so that informed citizen can take right decisions. They educate the users of libraries on various information and documentary sources. Public libraries explain to users where to start searching for information resources, how to identify their needed resources, and to access them. Public libraries provide multiples information sources for users to compare their findings. Public libraries disseminate information on the development of the community, information on culture, trade, education and so on. Information seekers may want exhaustive information, Public libraries provide training to develop information literacy competency and to educate users to be able to make user information literate, and this helps to provide the right information to the right users.

Through public libraries people can discover new knowledge and learn new skills, get informed about the personal health and well-being, find out about government and local authority service, and seek information about employment and business development. Public libraries help foster a common sense of place and identity for people of all ages, back grounds and cultures in the community. Public libraries provide well stocked reference materials and wide-ranging loan service based on the systems of branch libraries. They change lives and build strong communities. Public libraries build up collections that relates to local interest. They provide information for local industry and commerce, organized libraries services for the local schools, hospital and jails. The dissemination of information is vital to the development of the individual because it is the medium through which people get acquainted with new and modern concepts in various field of study (Osagi, 2010). Good library services are available to all without charge; special facilities are provided for the disabled library users. Library board and branch libraries acquired, catalogued and classified information materials and process the materials and distributed them to branches in different places to

be used by users. Public libraries preserve elements of culture and tradition from generation to generation, and expanding them worldwide by enabling a smooth and accurate flow of information. Public libraries make provision for assistance by librarians in directing and analyzing tremendous amount of knowledge with variety digital tools. Public libraries have different departments that handled different functions, such as:

Circulation: Library circulation services point to two important roles which are (i.) Control and regulation of access to library materials and (ii.) Public relations. These services are user center services. They handle user accounts, loaning operations and physical organisation of materials. With the current changes in library services the aspect of public relation now come in with bridging the library activities and the pubic they serve.

Technical services: These are work behind the scene which involve, cataloguing, classification and processing of information materials. Ensuring that the materials are most suitable placed for user's identification, location and use.

Collection Development: Acquiring and building the collection resources is a major function of the public library. They order materials and maintain materials budgets.
Public libraries in essences proffer the following:
Lay the foundation for lifelong education.
Inculcate good reading habits.
Foster the academic program of the schools.
prepare pupils, students, lecturers and other researchers for success in examinations or other research works.
Give social training on how to get needed information.
Encourage the spirit of enquiry and independent learning.
Help researchers to achieve better result.

Is a resource base for the teacher and lecturers.
train learners to learn.
Create and maintain conducive atmosphere for users.
One can say that, public libraries provides all possible information needs for researchers, students, academic /non-academic staff as well as neighboring communities, and they are supporting the academic institutions by making their resources available as required by all categories of users.

Information Literacy
According to UNESO (2007), the concept of information literacy is considered as crucially important to enable people to deal with the challenge of making good use of information and communication technology. In this context, _information literacy' has become a new paradigm in the information and communication landscape. Sometimes other synonyms such as _information fluency' or _information competency' are being used instead. How the concept is defined, understood and applied differs at this early stage in the concept's development from one nation, one culture or one linguistic group to another. However, the Alexandria Proclamation adopted by the High-Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning in November 2005 defines information literacy as a mean to —empower people in allworks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goalsl. This is the ability to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. Literacy instruction, user education, bibliographic instruction and library research are related concept of information literacy. Those that are knowledgeable in the use of information in such a way that others can learn from them, who can always find the information needed for any task, because they know how knowledge is organized are the information literates. They can

impart their knowledge to provide information literate citizens that can have independent learning to solve their problems and become independent learners. They can also contribute positively to the community for dissemination of information to individuals.

There is a paradigm shift in the new generation, where children and adult have access to various modes of information and entertainment. Every middle-class household in Nigeria is equipped with at least one electronic gadget such as, music system, television, radio, internet, VCD-player, DVD-player etc. These help them to obtain their daily and needed information for life. Todays' public library users get more satisfaction from reading classic literature, contemporary literature and know the cultural heritage of Nigeria and the state he/she belong. Useful documents such as career handbooks, encyclopedias, directories, dictionaries etc are accessible in public libraries for users to help in personality development. These libraries also conduct various extension programmes, like quiz competition, story, poetry and essay writing competition, etc to enhance knowledge acquisition and improve the reading habits of the users' especially younger user of the public libraries.

Enhancing Information Literacy:
Information literacy has become a new paradigm in the information and communication landscape, portrays a broader concept of information literacy. According to the IFLA guideline (2006), there are several terms that are part of or contribute to the information literacy (IL) concept. They each have their own semantic content in addition to differences characterized by the type of skills, level, the categories of learning, and instructional facilitating methods. Comprising many different concepts, IL has evolved beyond early library instruction and information skills-focused programs to the current concept of information literacy. While library instruction emphasizes the location of library materials, another IL concept focuses on information strategies, and in yet another concept, IL is used to describe the process of information-seeking and information use competencies such as:

- Information fluency – Capability or mastering of information competencies
- User education – Global approach to teach information access to users
- Library instruction – Focuses on library skills
- Bibliographic instruction – User training on information search and retrieval
- Information competencies – Compound skills and goals of information literacy
- Information skills – Focuses on information abilities
- Development of information skills – Process of facilitating information skills.
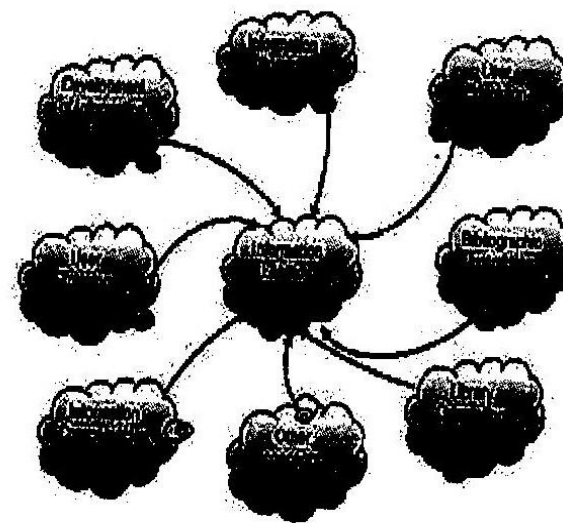

Fig. 1: The Concept of Information Literacy by Lau (2006)

Information literacy enhancement programme for public libraries would be a kind of training course for the trainers. The public

librarians would impart training to the end user of public libraries. Some librarians started their career before the introduction of information communication Technologies (ICT) in library service and information handling. For one to handle the ICT skills, communication and teaching skills, it needs to be obtained freshly through the refresher courses. In enhancing the information literacy, Tiwari (2011) posits that the following points must be considered:

i. Confidence in communicating, instructing and educating the users.
ii. The ability to apply the principles of scholarly communication to problems of information handling.
iii. The ability to locate, select and use appropriate information retrieval tools in order to obtain useful information in connection with studies or work of the end users and when required.
iv. Confidence in using, and satisfaction in carrying out information searching.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. Voices around the world are demanding leadership on poverty, inequality and climate change. To turn these demands into actions, world leaders gathered on 25 September, 2015, at the United Nations in New York to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On 1st January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN

Summit — officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The SDGs, also known as Global Goals, build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The new Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. The sustainable development Goals (SDGs), aimed at transforming our world: include the following goals:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. .
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Fig. 2: SDGS Nigeria Logo. Source; https://www.google.com/search?:

While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the Goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level. The 17 sustainable development goals covers every aspect of human life and endeavours. The basics of ensuring that the aims and objectives of the goals are achieved is to inform the public of the SDGs.

Public Library Sustaining the Development Goals
The laudable objectives of the SDGs are human centric and as such requires every possible medium to get it to the actualisation. The public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women (IFLA 1994) is an essential medium in the actualisation of the SDGs objectives. Public libraries would be able to motivate library users in accessing library resources and availing users' services. They would be able to make strategies for influencing stakeholders, prepare action plans and be able to prepare learning and assessment modules both printed as well as web-enable for the learners. They would be able to communicate, instruct and educate library users. They would construct an institution at bibliographic system, they would be aware of wide range of source available for finding information. Select the source which will best meet users' needs. Public libraries would be able to compare and critically evaluate information obtained from various sources; they would use and create list servers, discussion forums, internet chat services, for obtaining and disseminating information. Public libraries would be aware of appropriate indexing, abstracting services, databases and understanding the

principles of their use. Through public libraries, people can discover knowledge and learn new skills, get informed about personal health and wellbeing, find out about government. Besides serving as a public learning place people educate themselves, they must be seen as contributing effectively in the enhancing of the economy. Public libraries would develop database searching techniques for accessing both web- based CD-Rom databases, public libraries would be able to use international academic networks for getting information, public libraries in Nigeria should offer high quality service comparable to those service offered by public libraries of high standard anywhere else in the world. Public libraries would be able to develop, a systematic method of searching for information related to the areas of study of the users.

For Public libraries to have a good result for sustainable development they would look for possible source to generate fund, some of these can include the printing, bindery, the library bookshop, the reprographic services and consultancy services. The public libraries in Nigeria therefore could find these sources of funding a veritable means of generating alternative fund for the board.

Problems of Public Libraries Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS)

Poor management – Often times it was assumed that individuals appointed to manage the funds in certain positions had the requisite qualifications, the interest of the nation and the program at heart as well as the capacity to manage the funds successfully towards the achievement of the SDG targets but this was not the case, and the outcomes were far from what was expected.

Poor funding – the scanty, outdated and irrelevant collections to meet the public needs, inadequate and out-modeled physical structures, equipment, inadequate staffing and other things in some Nigeria public libraries is as a result of poor funding.

Need to review the enabling laws – there are need to review the present law to include status of public libraries in the public services, composition and membership of the board, qualifications of staff, functions and services of the directorates, and appropriate funding.

Lack of qualified library personnel – some public libraries can no longer retain qualified library personnel rather the qualified librarians' move from public libraries to other types of libraries for a better payment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, SDGs objectives is of less effect without the involvement of the people that it is designed to serve, as such the people needs to be informed and educated about the processes for proper implementation. The public libraries serve better in the education and carrying the people along with the SDGs programmes. Hence, public libraries are significant in enhancing information literacy for sustainable development and achieving the sustainable development goals SDGs come 2030.

Recommendations

The following are proposed for recommendations to help curb the challenges that public libraries faces with SDGs;

Redefined Status – As observe with the challenge of the need to review the enabling laws guiding the Nigerian public libraries, there is a greater need to upgrade the status of the Nigerian public libraries. Thee public library is to be the centre and stating point of grassroots community development and partnership. As such every programmes as SDGs should as a point of order of

information and sensitisation always state with the Public library.

Adequate Funding- Various sources for adequate funding of the public libraries nationally such as Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) should be looked at. Public libraries should apply to the agency for aid as an alternative source, any such bodies and companies could provide them with alternative sources of fund.

International Partnership - Community Aid has always existed in the history of the public library. International Aid agencies are an undisputed alternative source of funding for the public libraries such as UNESCO, Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation. The British council, UNDP, Book Aid international, World Bank, Book for Africa project and European Union. They should continue so that public libraries could enhance information literacy for sustainable development perfectly.

Qualified Staffing and Remuneration - librarians and other para-professional staff in public libraries should be motivated in terms of good conditions of services and salaries so that they can be attracted to their jobs. Also staff development and training such as workshops, conferences, seminars on- the- job training in- house and adequate budget to support for training of staff to acquire higher qualifications.

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