



Community Library for Education for Sustainable Development in Nigerian Digital Age

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Abstract

This paper is on Community Library for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Nigerian Digital age. The paper is an analytical perspective of literature and recognizance survey conducted on community library as a fundamental hub that connect communities with preserved information and cultural heritage for the Nigerian ESD. In the paper are the relevance of library information resources for the speedy advancement of research and development for a digital Nigeria. The idea of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a school curriculum package with a worldwide standard of teaching and learning is treated to equip the indigenous learners with skills and knowledge to be able to work in a global market place with a universal knowledge base. Correspondingly is the correlation between community library and the ESD through digital access and use of resources for new novelties in the society. Various challenges of the Nigerian Education system and as they affect the ESD were identified and the ways forward suggested.

Keywords: Community Library, Education for Sustainable Development, Digital age, Nigeria.

Introduction

Generally, a community library is a small public library system that is established to serve the information needs of a community setting of about 25, 000 people. It is an innovative, user-centric library that is designed to provide free learning and use of information resources and communication to users. As a repository of knowledge, the collections generally may include textbooks, storybooks, reference sources, films, pictures, newsletters, maps, atlases, magazine, paintings and drawings, journals, health books, and in modern time, CDs, DVDs, audiobooks, Internet websites for homework support, careers programs, health talks, cartons that facilitate learning for kids, etc. These resources provide a lifelong learning that improve and maintains quality education and the development of appropriate knowledge, good value system and skills for decision making and employability. The library

may be established, financed and maintained by state government, a local government authority, community effort, cooperate establishment such as foundation, professional association, or a philanthropist.

In this digital era, where people appreciate the information they need to be delivered to them in their well-being zone, many community libraries are including unlimited access to their information resources from anywhere and anytime using the Internet. Omigie & Ezegwu (2022) asserted that with library Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) hotspot, library patrons can connect with their mobile gadgets to access e-resources elsewhere. Many community library network facilities are providing opportunities for e-learning through mobile technology, Internet of Things (IoT), Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning, etc. Community libraries in this era are highways to research knowledge and information

and librarians are assisting users in providing them the knowledge and skills needed to connect and access required resources anywhere and anytime proving that we are now indeed in the world of information in your palm.

Clearly, a community library is a central hub for community learning space, recreational activities and enquiries. It is a centralized pivot that connect communities with preserved knowledge and cultural heritage. Stanistreet (2019) declared that community library provides various learning opportunities and information to a marginalized residents. Edwards, Rauseo & Unger (2013) also affirmed that a community library builds individuals, foster reflection on community education and uplift the educationally disadvantaged group. Community library therefore, is a grass root based library established to provide necessary information resources, whether online or offline, for self-sustainable teaching and learning for societal development.

In every society, libraries are integral part of education structured to acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information resources to users. In this digital era and with varied mobile devices and Internet connectivity, users are now accessing data and information in libraries across the globe. Omeluzor & Ogo (2018) in support of this view stressed that library is one of the most vital components needed for national development because of their information resources that guarantee sustainable all round development. Similarly, Omigie et al., 2018 also asserted that library resources are basic tools required for the training and acquisition of basic knowledge and skills for sustainable self and national development. Correspondingly, Trivedi (2019) acknowledged the libraries as knowledge centers. In another view, Adesode (2019) likewise affirmed that libraries are vital components of technical education and training. In developing countries of Africa and especially in Nigeria, the relevance of library for individual and national development are now seriously being appreciated as the speedy vehicle for information and research advancement for education and development.

In this era of Internet and information use, various literature have indicated that the education for sustainable development (ESD) and community library cannot be isolated. In our recognizance survey of some public libraries and schools for this study (see method of the study), most of the librarians and school teachers were observed to have no firm knowledge about the aims of ESD as intellectual skills

and competences program that is designed to support their community needs and to adjust to the challenges of their changing environment. Without community library support services, achieving ESD goals would be an illusion. UNESCO (2014) affirmed that libraries are among the most sustainable educational institution in a community. In support of UNESCO, Onifade & Sado (2019) and IFLA (2022) also stressed that digital library provides the needed support to access, produce, create and share knowledge – together with and through the promotion of open access to scientific knowledge, research and innovations. In this sense, developing community libraries in Nigeria would be bringing the education for sustainable development (ESD) and its components to the people at the grass root through campaign awareness for maximum outcome. But this had not been done anywhere.

ESD is library, information and technology driven because of their correlation. To strengthen this axiom, Thomas & Glao (2018) stated that community library provides adequate myriad of educational materials such as textbooks, storybooks, pictures, drawings, cartons and storytelling for kids, training courses, and recreational facilities for leisure, website trainings and learning, etc. In some places, community libraries offer webpages that highlight information and news in a locale. Where education is financially expensive, most community libraries have been identified to serve as the people's institutions of higher learning because of the information resources and educational opportunities provided through network access. Some provide classes, maker-space and online continuing education programs such that can facilitate the goals of Education for Sustainable Development, etc.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the objective for this study is to examine the role of community library in the development of the ESD in Nigerian digital era. Specifically, the study seeks out:

1. The concept and relevance of community library information resources for education and development for a digital Nigeria;
2. The idea of ESD as a school curriculum standard for teaching and learning skills for universal employability;
3. The correlation between community library and ESD as novelty for new self-help and national development as envisaged by UNESCO
4. The challenges of the Nigerian educational

system and the ESD, and

5. The role of community libraries in ESD for the Nigerian digital era.

Method of the Study

This study is based on reviewed literature perspectives and observations from our recognizance survey of twelve public libraries and fifteen secondary schools in four states selected from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. The survey was done within a period of four months: September - December, 2022. The visits enabled the authors to directly observe the situation on ground and interacted with the librarians, management and staff of the schools visited. The observations and findings are embedded in the general discussions of the study as convenient to strengthen the speculative and empirical review. Scholastic website posts and journals were searched using key terms in the subject matter to previewed relevant theoretical and empirical contents, the scope covered, appraisal of data and their findings. The extracted information were discussed as they are related with the subject matter of the study.

Concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The ESD also called Global Education or Sustainable Education, is a UNESCO concept for the education for-all initiative. Omigie, et al. (2018) noted that the idea of UNESCO sustainable education was a school curriculum program that has a universal standard of teaching and learning designed to equip the learners to be able to work in a global market place with a universal knowledge base. The ESD was designed to involve a systematic teaching and learning program, through which individuals are motivated and empowered to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development. UNESCO believe was that through acquisition of skills and competences, individuals would be able to adjust to the challenges of the society through the application of the intellectual knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to design a workable self-reliance and sustainable future. In our survey observation, nothing was on ground in the schools and libraries to justify any head way to such goals. The librarians and teachers were noted, to even have no knowledge about the full aims of the ESD project or its implementation anywhere.

As a special education program, the ESD is UNESCO'S target at providing the educational needs of the less privileged class across the world so as to systematically eradicate hunger, poverty, war, gender

inequality and ensure efficient resources control so as to achieve global justice, fairness, human rights, sustainability, peace and inter-cultural communication agenda. Also, through the ESD, Omigie, et al. (2018) believed that the individuals would be able to salvage the earth and the ecosystem from the proliferation of the negative impacts of global warming, Climatic changes and ensure that there is maintenance of a sustainable safer environment from earth degradation. Yet, implementation was observed to be its tootling problem.

It is our believe that although there is no accurate pedagogy for sustainability education across the globe because of economic and cultural diversity of nations, libraries have the fundamental information resources and network bases to achieve the ESD goals across member states. The IFLA/UNESCO program of action launched in 2022 is actively engaging in this respect. The document is encouraging nations to actively support and be involved in the development of school and public libraries to enhance information access and sharing. By this development, libraries in the country will be able to engage fully with the formal educational activities essential for the educational transformation effort of the ESD, etc.

Challenges in the Nigerian Education and the ESD

Nigerian educational system have witness various challenges and reforms since 1969 – 2020. There were the 6-3-3-4 system, the free Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE), etc. aimed at knowledge and skills acquisition for self-reliance and national growth. But in our survey of the schools, there was no observed worthwhile achievement. The teachers were not trained for the project implementations, the schools were all understaffed, no school libraries were developed nor special learning facilities provided. Other dynamic and global educational innovations and changes that were also later introduced with new curriculum all suffered the same faith. To affirm this fact, Udofia (2021) asserted that the Nigerian school curriculum has witnessed various reviews to facilitate value reorientation concept, poverty eradication, critical thinking, entrepreneurship and lifelong skills acquisition. Correspondingly, Ejike & Oke (2018) lamented the major challenges in Nigerian school curriculum to shortage of specialized teachers, unfavorable learning environments, deprived infrastructural facilities and deficiency of fund for education, poor training and retraining for teachers,

among others. Nigerian school teachers hardly go for conferences, workshops and seminars because of dearth of sponsorship and for lack of school facilities to implement any such new knowledge and skills acquired.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) (2018) moreover reported that public libraries that were supposed to be major partners in Nigerian educational development were going through hard times. The report noted that apart from financial constraints and epileptic power supply, there were dearth of current books, journals and Internet facilities, shortage of staff, dilapidated structures, absence of school libraries and unconducive reading environment. In confirmation of this report, Okafor (2020) observed inadequate funding of public libraries, insufficient ICT infrastructure and staff with ICT skills, refusal of younger librarians to work in the public libraries because of poor conditions of service, difficulty in extending services to rural areas because of lack of basic facilities, unconducive library environment, and dearth of current library resources as some of the problems be deviling public library development in Nigeria. All these issues are bound to affect poor patronage of the libraries.

Okorodudu (2022) detected corruption and government indifference to the Nigerian standard of education as major obstacles hindering the attainment of the desired educational system. According to this author, funds often meant for educational development are embezzled by government official through over invoicing and without the government worried. Udenka & Azubike (2022) also lamented lack of good governance, bad policy implementation, exam malpractice and financial gratification, certificate forgery and over importance attached to certificates as some of the corrupt practices thwarting the growth of the educational systems in Nigeria. In the same vain, Eke (2022) acknowledged other issues including but not limited to gender inequality, dearth of teachers in schools, overcrowded classrooms, poor curriculum implementation, inadequate learning infrastructure, insincerity, poor salaries and funding for education as some of the problems disturbing the Nigerian education system. All these issues, we also observed were responsible for the Nigerian young graduates' apathy for the teaching profession.

On another development, Aawasika (2020) observed lack of teaching materials and text books for teachers and students in the schools. According to this author, teachers are not provided with teaching and learning materials to prepare their lessons and

teach students. In a corresponding view, Okojie (2021) similarly identified lack of science laboratory equipment and dearth of teachers in many government science secondary schools in South-East Nigeria. According to author, the situations are further worsen by the lack of library facilities in the schools and the students' high hardness to buy books and using public library learning materials. This is further collaborated by Aina (2020) with regret of students' unwillingness to learning, go to library to read because their society has replaced educational value for money.

It is also pertinent to report here this sadden observation, that teaching, which was once regarded as noble profession, no longer have teachers with research – based teaching techniques because majority of the current teachers are not professionals who can integrate teaching methods with technology. The teaching profession is now one of the lowest paying jobs that is freely open for all dick-and-harry in the country. Ogedegbe (2021) likewise was sadden by the incapacity of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), a government agency designated to regulate the teaching profession, to decide who enters the job. Idoko (2022) reported the National Executive Secretary of the National Secondary Education Commission (NSSEC) Prof. Benjamin Abakpa public statement that shortage and poor quality of teachers are the bane in the delivery of quality secondary education in Nigeria, etc. This coming from a government official explains the height of the situation and the government inaction to remedy some of the problems.

For the ESD program to succeed, the above challenges need to be critically addressed through community library services. The ESD is a sprig off of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda that is concerned with meeting the needs of the present generation without depleting the needs of the upcoming generation. Nnaemeka-Okeke et al. 2020 views that SDG targets are to eradicate poverty, enhance global resources and safeguard the use of technology for individual and national development is true and most welcome call for attention by all stakeholders. We believed that the UNESCO's trust is that through ESD, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda would be achieved through adaptable global school curriculum program.

We are now in digital era also called knowledge economy or information society, technology age, etc. Any form of education in this era without library resources base, will certainly shipwrecked. Library information resources are fundamental to facilitating

the objectives of ESD. Nevin (2008) postulation that education supports understanding one another, link our inclusive natural and social background with respect, sense of justice, responsibility, exploration and dialogue and accepting a behavioral practices that will empower all to live a complete life free from deprivation of basic essentials of life, need the society food-for-thought.

Role of Community library in ESD

In today's world of globalization where science and technology are making changes in all domains of human life, education for sustainable development should be all-involving. Generally, individual life styles are changing, existing sociocultural order disintegrating and inexplicable smartly new ways of life emerging. Community libraries have the capacity to help people to adjust to this new trends. UNESCO (2014) statement viewed the library as the hub of every learning institution and societal advancement. Library resources and services, when well developed, offer creative prospects for learning, literacy built with new ideas and innovative skills. Adesode (2019) assertion that community library provides support for the learners to gain explicit knowledge from which other skills can be developed is an appropriate support of UNESCO statement. With community library resources, it possible to advance research and collaborate with people to fuel the economic and sociocultural advancement.

Community library resources helps to reconstruct or develop individual minds for new novelties. Banks (2021) described the library as a de facto community center that connect people in need with resources to build their societies. According to this author, libraries provide important resources to small business owners through trappings and databases. To support this idea, we believed that ICT and the library can also stock and disseminate resources on business information to assist patrons who are on the lookout for new business ideas to use. Through such library resources, business managers, entrepreneur, artisans and even farmers will be better equipped with trending concepts to expand their businesses and trade into new frontiers.

Also through digitization, a community library can collect, organize and preserve community cultural heritage. LISBDNETWORK (2022) postulation is true that library through cultural activities can make available books with expression of creative talent of aesthetic appreciation. These days, many

community libraries are involved in the organization of cultural programs such as musical concerts, dance, drama, painting exhibition and competitions for children to enrich the cultural life of a community. In our observations, that through community library, the collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination of Nigerian Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) can come to be more appreciated through shared knowledge and network access between our community people and other peoples of the world if the libraries are well funded by government.

All work and no play, is said, made Jack a doll boy. Community library can provide for healthy use of leisure time free from negative and destructive activities to community life. It can provide for recreational needs of users through stocks of books, films and programs suitable for different ages. Omigie (2016) affirmed this when he posited that with Internet connectivity, a user can surf the web playfully using personal portable smartphone. Others recreational activities may including reading novels, newspapers, magazines, journal article or other forms of literature, works of art, books of travels, biographies, etc. The library can also organize programs on health recreation and entertainments like the performing arts, musical concerts, etc. Indeed, community library is a vehicle for social change and regeneration.

For the physically challenged and less privilege persons in the society, community library can provide exciting opportunities for livable relationships with other able bodied patrons of the library. Through shared ideas, users can come to identify with persons of equal interest and pursuits of life and then develop deeper relations that can translate into concrete achievements. To this support, ALA (2022) acknowledged that library play a catalyst in the lives of people with disabilities by helping them with full web access, networking and collaboration opportunities through information sharing and use to facilitate communication. Ideas can come through interactions to build individuals' knowledge and skills for critical advances using science and technology to promote the cause of the individuals. In this era of ICT applications, there can be great abilities in disability.

Mandu (2020) opined that through library films show, web access, library talk and other activities, community library can promote the objectives of an educational system through vivid description of concepts that have been taught to the learner and needed better clarifications. Trivedi (2019) also supported this view when the author asserted that as

the nature of information access changes, librarians can seek further opportunities to adding value to their services through managing metadata, publishing content and making them available to users beyond their own libraries. This author also postulated that courses/learning resources can be delivered to learners through small group unsupervised work, laboratory classes, independent study with on/off site support, group learning, etc.

Summary

In this paper, it has been established that community library is a fundamental resource base for community life-long learning, improved quality education, good knowledge and improved value system and skills competences. The digital era is the period of up-to-date library services that is facilitated by network technologies for information access and dissemination. As an integral part of education, this paper also established the library as a knowledge center critical for intellectual skills and competences as needed for ESD. The ESD as stated here, is an all-inclusive knowledge and skills competences based for self-reliance and sustainable future. The Nigerian educational challenges raised are not insurmountable. With concerned commitments, it is obvious that there is sustainable future development for the community libraries and ESD in Nigeria. In this paper, Nigerians want community libraries that can set the pace for others.

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