

Exploring the Roles of Libraries in using Digital Platforms to achieve Quality Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explores the roles of Libraries in achieving Quality Education using digital platforms for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. It is of the view that Librarians have a strong commitment to make towards the realization of the global initiative of Sustainable Development Goals 2030 especially in this digital era. The context of SDGs, Quality Education, roles of libraries towards quality education, and various ways libraries in Nigeria can achieve quality education towards Sustainable Development using various digital platforms in the library were critically outlined. This paper agrees that information providers and managers, as part of their responsibility should ensure that Nigeria achieved the SDGs by 2030 through the provision of Qualitative Education using various digital platforms in the library. This study therefore recommends that libraries in Nigeria should be adequately supported by the parent institutions by providing and making accessible needed/relevant information resources in various formats for the users; encourage and promote information literacy programmes aimed at creating awareness of library and internet resources for the pupils/student/teachers/librarians; and approve staff trainings towards improvement of skills of librarians and library staff locally, nationally and internationally.

Keywords: Library, Librarians, Quality Education, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Information and knowledge are the foundation for innovation and growth in organization, society and individual advancement. This is because they are the supporting tool for all decisions and actions regarding any development and enterprise. Information and knowledge are therefore strategic tools for achieving sustainable development in the areas of Quality Education, economic, social, and environmental objectives. Recognizing this important role, World Summit for Social Development (1995) posited that expanded access to knowledge, technology, education, health-care services and information is one feature that will promote an enabling environment for sustainable development. One way of achieving this is through supporting institutions, programmes and systems to disseminate practical information to promote Quality Education using especially digital platforms in which the society is driven today. According to UNDP(2000), quality education is a programme that involves learners, content, processes, environment and outcomes.

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities.
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.
- Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDs prevention and peace
- Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities
- Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

The library as an institution that serves to preserve intellectual contributions of the people and also disseminate essential knowledge needed for learning, education, societal progress and survival is one area through which Quality Education can be achieved. Since access to information and knowledge is the core duty of the librarian and also an essential element for

sustainable development, libraries have the potential to provide information that will serve as catalyst for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

According to Oyemike (2016), Library and information service is an aspect of social service rendered to the society at different degrees and at different levels to ensure that members of the society at any time have access to timely and accurate information relevant to their information needs. Specifically, the public libraries are there to support functional literacy programmes and provide information services to people from all walks of life, with the special libraries supporting research institutes and other organizations with specific interests. In the same vein, the academic libraries support research, teaching and learning in tertiary institutions while school libraries support the pupils and students of both primary and secondary schools by assisting them to imbibe the reading culture that foster strong educational base. Moreover, the national library helps in preserving our cultural heritages amongst other functions. From the above, it is safe to admit that libraries and information centers (LICs) occupy a central position in the overall development of the society in all ramifications.

Today, information and communication technologies are playing vital roles in the proper dissemination of information and recorded knowledge to various users and have revolutionized librarianship. Various digital platforms exist through which information can now be used to serve users who are far and near to meet their information needs. Digital Platforms like institutional repositories, mobile technologies, open access, databases, emails, websites, social media etc are to be used to get information across to users.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the roles libraries can play in achieving quality Education for sustainable development goals (SDG 4) using different digital platforms. Specifically, it presents the important roles of libraries in creating access to Quality Education to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal in Nigeria using different digital platforms.

Sustainable Development Goals 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable Quality Education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are an intergovernmental set of aspiration

goals with 169 targets, spearheaded by the United Nations (UN). On the 19th July, 2014, the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) forwarded a proposal for the SDGs to the Assembly. The proposal contained 17 goals with 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. These included ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forest etc. Following the negotiations that started in January to August 2015, a final document was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit September 25-27, 2015 in New York, USA. (UNDP, 2015).

The 2015 United Nations SDGs is projected to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions - economic, social and environmental - in a balanced and integrated manner. SDG agenda addresses impediment to sustainable development such as poverty, hunger, ill-health, education, gender inequality and environmental sustainability. Five elements were listed as essential in the targets of the goals which include people, peace, planet, partnership and prosperity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda. They tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet.

Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.

Achieving inclusive and quality education for all is the SDG 4 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Quality Education is one of the 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. This goal ensures that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. It also aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, and to eliminate gender and wealth disparities with the aim of achieving universal access to a quality higher education. (UNDP: 2015). Nigeria as a developing nation has so much to do to actualize the SDGs by 2030 which attaining quality education is one of them. The attainment of this Goal is most crucial in Nigeria. It reaffirms that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. Library however, as the engine room of education has a lot to do in helping Nigeria actualize this global vision.

Various ways Libraries in Nigeria can use digital platforms to achieve Quality Education

According to Nwaigwe and Onwuama (2007), Library is a collection of books and non-book materials organized and housed in a place for use, with one or more persons trained to assist in the use of the collection. It is a combination thereof; of trained staff to provide and interpret such materials as required to meet the informational, cultural, recreational, or educational needs of users; establish schedule in which services of the staff are available to users; the physical facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule. This definition indicates that libraries are instituted to collect vital information, preserve the recorded knowledge and offer them for Quality Education to serve the users. There are so many types of libraries in Nigeria which are positioned to assist the users in solving their educational and information needs. These libraries range from school library or media resource centre, public library, academic library, special library, National library, electronic/digital/virtual libraries. The services that these libraries give differ; depending on the level of the patrons for which the library was instituted. Libraries are set up to collect, organize and disseminate adequate information, resources and facilities in an environment that is healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive. They support all classes of people, professionals and students in learning, knowledge acquisition and research through provision of information resources that cover all areas of human specialties. Libraries are vital components in the information distribution chain

because they serve to expand access to up-to-date information in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life.

According to Anyaoku (2016), Librarians are so rich in information provision that they are unequalled and unrivaled in developing tools and databases that are reference points in access to information. Many libraries today are hybrid libraries that provide access to resources in both print and electronic formats. Resources available in a standard library include reference sources, basic textbooks and general literature that support extended learning for the users. They also provide information retrieval tools such as online public access catalogue (OPAC), indexes, abstracts and online bibliographic databases. Collection also includes systematic reviews, academic guidelines and protocols to support academic decision-making and evidence-based practice and decision making in learning; handbooks, popular books, lay books that are used to provide lifestyle modification and well being information for students and researchers and other academic community users.

As an institution designed for information provision and preservation of relevant documents of value, libraries can achieve the following roles using various digital platforms:

1. Creation of Awareness- Libraries at different stages and levels create awareness in educating her citizens. Creating useful awareness about the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 should also be one of the duties of libraries in Nigeria. Awareness is said to be the beginning, and what one does not know about, he cannot work on. Creation of awareness could be done by using libraries social media platforms like facebook, twitter, instagram, pinterest, email addresses of users, school websites etc to inform and educate her users. Producing and sharing digital handbills, placing posters at different strategic places in libraries, embarking on radio, television awareness programmes, teaching the use of library course to students of higher institutions are avenues to be explored for qualitative education.
2. Provision of Quality Space- A library is expected to provide quality space to reinforce the spirit of learning and to imbue the knowledge-interaction experience with a powerful sense of importance. Digital materials of recent have joined the traditional librarianship and require space. This space includes reading rooms, discussion rooms, computer laboratory, makerspace room, digitisation room, special collections etc. It is also to

provide a significant space for storage of books, archival materials, computers and other collections of library materials and indigenous knowledge collections. When pupils/students and users know that the library has space and materials for studying, practice and discussions, they will be attracted in making use of the library and thereby gain knowledge and attain the SDG 4.

3. **Creating Metadata-** A library provides a set of technical services for bibliographic control of books, journals, and other information formats. The predominant medium of knowledge was previously printed on paper, therefore the principles of organisational process known as cataloguing was used by academic librarians.. Digital resources became an integral part of the library's collections and the need to address more objects on the Web became important. Since cataloguing was no longer an adequate description for the digital resources, the proper address came to be known as metadata. Academic library for example, create metadata to make information accessible via the Web. Academic library plays a role in the development of portals, tools, and strategies customized for precision research on the vast Web. Creating metadata enables students and users to retrieve and locate materials that they are looking for conveniently without an endless search.
4. **Offering Digital Reference Services-** Library reference services, which originated around the needs and characteristics associated with print on paper, became the main point of contact for scholars to ask for help in pursuing their research among library collections. Typically, reference services operated in proximity to a collection of reference books, which represented compilations of useful facts of almost every imaginable type. But reference librarians worked from and assisted with collections and information sources went beyond the reference collection. In carrying out their roles, reference librarians both responded to questions that were brought to them and proactively created educational guides and other helpful tools to inform scholars before questions arose. As a result, reference services have changed significantly. Libraries now widely report that reference transactions have expanded from the reference desk to online chat, individual consultation, e-mails, and telephone conversations. Infact, reference services have become more virtual and all of these contribute in offering quality education to users.

5. **Teaching Information Literacy-** For decades, librarians have stood between academics and the chaos they would otherwise encounter in the world of knowledge. Librarians applied discretion not only in building, organizing, and managing collections but also in explaining them to students and scholars. Since reference services did not go far as anticipated, librarians have adopted the principal methodology of the academy and taught classes. In earlier days, the classes were called bibliographic instruction. In the digital age this service has come to be referred to as information literacy and it is going a long way in educating pupils, students and users on how to locate and retrieve materials in the library. Some of these instructions come CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs and in online databases.
6. **Choosing and Managing Resources-** Choosing resources lie at the heart of the library's primary purpose. Librarians chose many thousands of books, journal titles, and other forms of published information to add to an institution's knowledge assets. Many librarians participated in collection development, and some, known as bibliographers, specialized in the effort. Shortly afterward, emerging digital technology provided options to accomplish the selection process more easily. More recently, however, librarians have been dealing with an additional and different paradigm for providing access to resources. Resources in digital form, initially represented by journals and multimedia, are increasingly unavailable on a title-by-title basis. Rather, they are usually made available grouped as collections, and these collections are offered as sets. In addition, such sets previously available for purchase by subscription are shifting to an arrangement in which they are licensed rather than purchased. (Campbell: 2006)
7. **Collecting and Digitizing Archival Materials-** As a part of their founding purposes, some libraries have played key roles in providing access to archival materials of all types. In carrying out this role, librarians and archivists have sought out such materials and evolved principles for organizing, storing, and facilitating their use. This effort not only has helped to preserve the cultural heritage but also has provided a rich repository for research across a vast range of disciplines. In addition, these one-of-a-kind archival materials have brought unique research strengths and often distinction to the institutions

holding them. Libraries and other agencies therefore have started efforts to develop digital archives and make them available on the Web. This has caused an increase in the use of archives by scholars and in turn, has given new value and impetus to both the collecting and the digitizing of archival materials. (Campbell: 2006).

8. **Managing Digital Repositories-** The idea of maintaining digital repositories refers to maintaining collections of data actually stored and managed by a library and does not include data stored and managed by other agencies for which a library serves as a gateway or portal. Many Academic libraries for instance create and maintain Institutional Repositories, develop the policies necessary to accompany them, and help to manage the intellectual property rights associated with the data, constitute an urgent and important agenda. Through this, local contents are harnessed and developed, breakthroughs are as well experienced.
9. **Mobile Technologies-** In the traditional setting in the library, users often visited the library to have access to the contents of her collections or at most by correspondence to those who could afford the bills; but today, with the ever presence of Information and Communication technologies (ICTs), users can access the library via their mobile gadgets, ask relevant questions as it concerns their information needs, carry out researches and even surf through the webpages of the library. This is another good role that the library plays today in serving her various users towards the provision of Quality Education.

Conclusion

For libraries to effectively contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets especially Quality Education, they need support especially from their parent institutions to improve their facilities especially the digital platforms for greater services. Some elements have been identified which must be invested in and developed to empower easy flow of information. Availability and accessibility of information resources that cover all subjects and specialties are adjudged to be prerequisite for dissemination of literacy formation. These resources include relevant and quality open access resources, subscription based resources and other standard resources found in various libraries. It should be noted that the application of ICT

to Information dissemination in recent times has changed the way information is seen and handled. This is particularly important in the education sector where digital resources are most necessary in the libraries. Thus in recognition of the importance of the digital media in the library of today, libraries in Nigeria need to improve on their digital acquisition of e-books and e-journals. Most importantly, Information literacy programmes which are well organized and aimed at creating awareness of library and Internet resources on Sustainable Development Goals as well as skills to access them are needful for library personnel. This would enable them to conduct quality research that would help in training the boy and girl child, eradicate illiteracy, poverty and grant a universal access to quality higher education.

Furthermore, Information literacy can also be taught formally during meetings, workshops and seminars organized by the various education professional groups.

Staff training is another vital area that would improve the skills of librarians and equip them better for disseminating information for attaining the SDGs 4. Staff should also be supported to attend workshops and trainings organized by Library associations nationally and internationally. This will keep them updated in the practice. There is need for a specialty course in Nigeria within this few years remaining before 2030 on the roles of libraries in using digital platforms to achieve quality education towards Sustainable Development Goals. Library schools should develop this curriculum to build graduate manpower that has requisite skills and knowledge to work in the education environment. This will improve services.

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