

INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMMES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4: ANY NEXUS FOR LIBRARIANSHIP?

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Abstract

The United Nations' global agenda has given a framework to stimulate growth and development across member states within the next fifteen years and librarianship has quickly key-into this agenda, doing all they can to contribute to the actualization of these goals. In view of these sustainable development goals (SDGs), this paper discusses how Information Literacy Programmes (ILP) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) will help drive a sustained development and its implication for librarianship. The paper discusses librarianship and sustainable development goals (SDGs) with preference to goal 4. Examine the roles of ILP and ECE in achieving SDGs and what libraries and librarians can do about ILP and ECE in order to make more impact towards SDGs.

Keywords: *Early childhood education, Information literacy programmes, Librarianship, Sustainable development goals*

Introduction

On the 25th day of September 2015, 193 member states under the umbrella of the United Nations unanimously adopted a resolution to transform our world which was made up of set of goals known as Sustainable development goals (SDGs) that will span through the next 15years, a transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs as it were when, consisted of eight goals, set-up in 2000 by the United Nations, available at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>, was accused of being too narrow and failed to consider the root causes of poverty and overlooked gender inequality as well as the holistic nature of development. In view of this, the SDGs available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> was set out to proffer holistic solutions to societal problems and one of such goal (goal 4) focuses on "ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning".

It is agreed that the development of any country is dependent on the literacy level of her populace (Igbinovia and Egbodofu, 2015) and obtaining quality education is fundamental in improving lives and as such realising sustainable development; hence the need to pay prior attention to goal 4 which seeks to ensure inclusive and

quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. However, achieving goal 4 is dependent to a large extent on effective delivery of information literacy programmes and early childhood education. While Information literacy is a set of abilities with which an individual effectively utilise information in solving problems (Igbinovia, 2016a), information literacy programmes are the structures and systems set in place to make an individual information literate. On the other hand, early childhood education relates with teaching young children (formally and informally) up until age eight.

It is pertinent to assert that for any development agenda to be sustained there is need to cater for the education need of young ones, integrating them into the agenda. Thus, quality early childhood education will help to lay a good foundation for children that will prepare them for primary level education in line with goal 4, target 2 which ensures all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary school. However, all through the other targets within the goal, information literacy seems to play a major role in achieving the targets. The sustainable development goal 4 seems to constitute the educative and informative aspect of an individual's development. While librarians regardless of library type are involved in general informative and educative function, which come to bear in actualising sustainable developmental goal 4.

In view of the aforementioned, this paper seeks to address the role of librarianship in ensuring effective delivery of Information Literacy Programmes (ILP) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a means of achieving sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) by giving a discourse on ILP and SDG4; roles of ILP in achieving SDG4; ECE and SDG4; roles of ECE in achieving SDG4; and what librarians can do.

Librarianship and Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)

World leaders at the United Nations Headquarters in New York set out together on the path towards sustainable development, devoting ourselves collectively to the pursuit of global development and of “win-win” cooperation which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world, (United Nations, 2015a). They on behalf of those they serve unanimously adopted a set of 17 goals and 169 targets expected to champion the course of development for the next 15years (2015-2030). In view of this historic decision to achieve a sustained development, stakeholders including organisations, parastatals, ministries, professions, corporate bodies, and individuals, have began to take actions in this direction.

Librarianship as a proactive profession has taken a lead to drive progress across the entire UN 2030 agenda. Librarianship (contextually used to connote libraries and librarians) has been very proactive in their disposition towards realising SDGs. Libraries as an information-based institution have the potential to contribute a huge quota to the agenda through its conventional practices and taking up new roles. Ifidon (2006) asserts that planning without information is a bane to national development. This assertion holds true of global development and the library therefore positions itself as the hallmark for developmental planning by providing

stakeholders with information and information resources necessary for effective developmental planning. This implies that libraries should be involved in the developmental planning of their host community wither nationally or locally without which no developmental agenda will succeed.

Libraries involvement in SDGs will be highlighted below to reflect the generic place of relevance libraries occupy in the global agenda:

Creating awareness on SDGs: A major effect towards realising SDGs is to first create awareness to the general populace, who are by implication, stakeholders in the general agenda. Igbinovia (2016b) note that librarians are using several platforms like Television and radio broadcast, social platforms, individuals/group's engagement and academic fora to increase the level of awareness to SDGs. However, programmed messaging services through collaboration telecommunication providers will help avail "offline" individual, the privilege of receiving SDGs related information.

Providing universal access to information: A common attribute to all goals and targets is the place of information in achieving them. Librarianship as an information-based profession is thus rightly position to provide a universal access to information through the provision of information resources and repositories. This includes access to findings on SDGs related research, which is the bedrock to development.

Bridging digital divide: The united agenda, emphasises partnership across all levels. Libraries in some quarters have made ICT infrastructures and Internet services available either freely or at a cheap rate to enhance collaboration as well as create social and economic opportunities for well-being.

Management of Indigenous Knowledge: Libraries over the years have created/collated, process, preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge. This knowledge other than preserving our culture which projects development has been useful in enhancing orthodox medical practices, agricultural practices among others. When this information is currated, repackaged and disseminated they will help promote sustainable agriculture and healthy living.

Literacy Programmes: libraries have also shown relevance and committment to the global agenda through literacy programmes. This cuts across library literacy (ability to use library and resources and services to meet an information need) and digital literacy (ability to use technologies to handle and manage information) programmes. They are both captured by the term information literacy programme which will be further discussed in the course of this paper.

Overview of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)

All the goals within the global agenda are unique and equally important and as such treated in like manner. However, the focus of this work will be on goal 4 which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all. Education both formal and informal is considered the

bedrock of a Nation's development, and as such should be given prior attention. Martinez and Fernandez (2010) assert that the effect of education on the economy as a whole have been noted not only by economic growth models, but also by micro-economic studies which highlight the social effects of increased education. This implies that for any nation to grow, it must invest on the educational sector since availability and access to education is varies from one Nation to another. However, Igbuzor (2006) opines that education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. Lack of education results to illiteracy which is an individuals' inability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using print and written materials associated with varying context.

Information Literacy Programmes and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)

Information is an essential tool in any developmental agenda. The definitions of information varied from one author to another and from one profession to another. Uttor (1999) defines information as data valuable in the planning, decision making, and evaluation of any program. The importance of information cannot be over emphasised; Abdulahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015), see information as an essential tool for competitive advantage both at the individual, organisational, societal and national level. It is pertinent to state in view of the global agenda, the urgent need to equip individuals with the ability, skills and competence required to manage information for sustainable development, hence the concept of information literacy now referred to as Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

Moreover, CILIP defines information literacy as: "Knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner", (CILIP, 2004). The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a precursor in the IL field, and the Association for Educational Communications and Technologies state that "information literacy is the ability to find and use information is the keystone of lifelong learning" (Byerly and Brodie, 1999). They assert that to be information literate, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. By implication the information literate individuals are those who have learned how to learn with a great amount of independence, both as a skill and as a habit. Information literacy is linked with other types of related literacies, but it should be differentiated from them, especially from information technology, media literacy, network or Internet literacy, Digital literacy, Computer Literacy and Media Literacy (Bawden, 2001).

Lau (2006) opines that information literacy and lifelong learning have a strategic, mutually reinforcing relationship with each other that is critical to the success of every individual, organisation, institution, and nation-state in the global information society. These two modern paradigms should ideally be harnessed to work symbiotically and synergistically with one another if people and institutions are to successfully survive and compete in the 21st century and beyond. Regardless of its glaring importance, statistics (UNFPA, 2015) shows that about 103 million

people around the world lack basic literacy skills which include information literacy which prompt programmes capable of equipping individuals regardless of demographics, social and economic status, with basic information literacy skills.

Information literacy programmes could be referred to as measures, structures and strategies set in place to engage individuals with skills capable of making them information literate. It support specific information outcomes (reflected in the basic information literacy component (see figure 1), promotes critical thinking and equip individuals with lifelong learning. The aim of every information literacy programme is to make individuals information literate/lifelong learners.

The information literacy standards for becoming information literate or effective learners include three basic components: access, evaluation and use of information. The IFLA information literacy standards are based on these international experiences and contributions, and are fully described in the bibliography at the end of the document. The IFLA standards are grouped under the three basic IL components which are access, evaluation and use. These components have sub-components as expressed in the figure below:

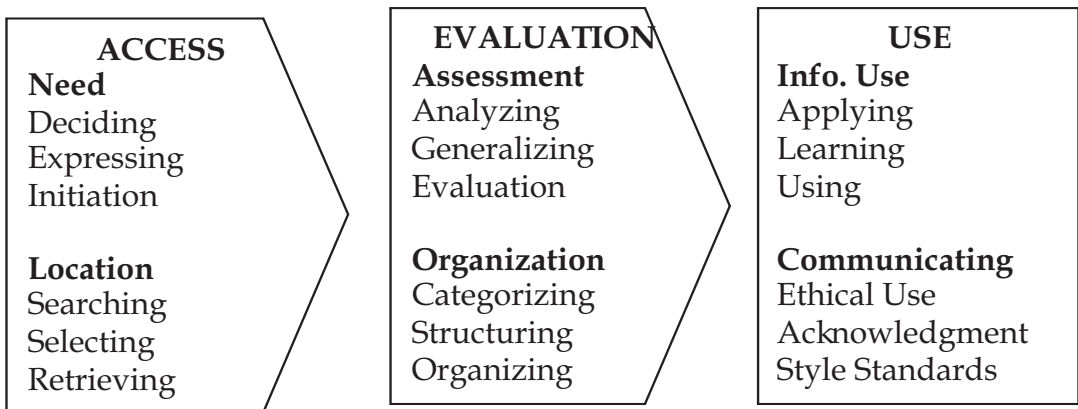


Figure 1:

Source: Lau, J. (2006) Guidelines on information literacy for lifelong learning.

Information literacy stands today as a major focus and purpose of librarianship as the librarian is concerned with the general management of information to meet the information need of their clientele, (Igbinovia, 2016a). Libraries are already taking actions that contribute to information literacy through their conventional practices of library instruction, bibliographic instruction and users' education. However, to make greater impact they must embrace new roles that better enhances their contribution. Such new roles could include information literacy advocacy, mobile library/outreach services and liaison or class room collaboration.

Information literacy programmes will not fully achieve its objective without unrestricted access to information. Several information systems like the library will therefore serve as a means to universal access to information as well as designing information literacy programmes necessary to take full advantage of the accessible information. According to Lau (2006) Librarians and other information specialist

should be promoters of information literacy programs and activities because their library or information center is a:

1. Repository of knowledge
2. Information reservoir in multiple formats
3. Center with librarians who are information experts
4. Department with learning spaces
5. Place for interaction with learning peers and teams
6. Space for knowledge socialization
7. Place with information advisers / reference specialists and consultants
8. Center with computer access, processing and communication of knowledge
9. Gateway to the Internet, a world of information

The roles of ILP in achieving of SDG 4

Ability to manage information which is delivered through Information Literacy Programmes will contribute to the success of the global agenda through SDG4 in the following regards:

1. An analysis of the aggregate loss of potential income suffered by those with zero years of schooling, compared to those who achieve various levels of functional literacy, would show a progressive increase, (Martizenz and Fernandez, 2010). Information literacy programmes thus help individuals increase their income level and subsequent standard of living.
2. Information literacy programmes equip people with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to access and utilize information on health issues, ensuring their overall well-being.
3. Information literacy will equip both young and old people with the right knowledge and skills required to seek business and job opportunities (job and business), access justice and participating in policy making that affects them.
4. Information literacy programmes will help young people in schools not only to have better academic outcomes but will also open them to scholarship opportunities.
5. Effective information literacy programmes make a literate Nation (where everyone is literate) where growth and development thrive.

What Libraries Can Do

In view of librarianship's role in achieving sustainable development goals through information literacy programmes, recommended actions that can be done to help amplify these roles are to:

1. Organise special ICT trainings for special groups of people, who ordinarily will not have access to such, an example is the rural dwellers. Let us start a "Reach Out" campaign aimed at taking library services and ICT trainings to rural dwellers.
2. Make themselves available as a blend of physical and digital space into an integrated space that makes information literacy experience exciting.
3. Library professionals frequently teach information literacy skills to library clients and students. For example, familiarity with the features of Wikipedia

pages that allow librarians to teach key digital information literacy strategies that patrons can apply to other digital content, such as checking the editing history, locate the sources cited and investigate the talk pages for discussions about the content and bias in an article (Bishop, 2015).

4. Provide a safe and non-judgmental environment with skilled staff and wide range of reading materials to suit the capabilities and interests of all users, (ensuring inclusiveness). For the child the aim is to make reading fun and enjoyable, whereas for the adult it is to open to up new opportunities, increase self-esteem and enable greater participation in local events, (CILIP, 2015).
5. Libraries, beyond informing and educating the public on SDGs, must serve as a pillar for empowering communities through knowledge and the ability to access information for themselves, (Radijeng, 2013).
6. Libraries and librarians are currently supporting the “back to school” campaign that seeks to remove children from the streets into schools where they have the opportunity to learn and become information literate.
7. The importance of universal and affordable access to the Internet must also be recognised as a key enabler of growth. Hence, libraries worldwide should provide that public access to the supporting networks and ICT which are considered as vital as the means of accessing information, (CILIP, 2015).
8. Collaborate with faculties and administrators to ensure that students graduate as information literate graduates by incorporating information literacy outcomes (information access, evaluation and use) into curriculum or individual courses.

Early Childhood Education and Sustainable Development Goal 4

According to UNESCO, early childhood is defined as the period from birth to eight years old. This implies that early childhood education of a child starts right from when a child is given birth to till eight years of age, when such child would likely be primary three since primary school education starts from age 6 according to National policy on education (NPE). UNESCO sees early childhood period as a time of remarkable brain growth, these years lay the basis for subsequent development. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than a preparatory stage assisting the child's transition to formal schooling. It places emphasis on developing the whole child, attending to his/her social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs to establish a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. In line with the Education 2030 agenda, UNESCO supports national, regional and international efforts to expand and improve ECE provision equitably so as to provide every child the best in life.

Furthermore, early childhood care and education (ECCE) are crucial for the development of individuals, reduction of inequalities, prevention of developmental disorder and subsequently achieving the objective of the international programme of Education For All (EFA), and UNESCO is committed to raising awareness of its importance as stated in the Moscow Framework for Action. ECCE encompasses all actions that contribute to the survival, growth, development

and learning of children. This includes the health, nutrition, hygiene as well as cognitive, social, emotional and physical development from birth to starting primary school.

ECE programs include any type of educational program that serves children in the preschool years and designed to improve later school performance. ECE has an important role to play in achieving SDG4 from facts gathered, it is obvious that a child besides education needs proper health care, protection and enrichment, which when incorporated fosters the multiple development potential of young children, making them better adult in future with good learning outcomes. It helps the child develop basic skills, values, attitudes, behaviours and habits. It can help in laying a sound intellectual, psychological, emotional, social and physical foundation for quality education that will promote lifelong learning and help the child become an asset to the Nation.

The roles of ECE in achieving of SDG 4

Early Childhood Education as an essential part of a child's cognitive development will contribute to the success of the global agenda through SDG4 in the following regards:

1. It would prepares the child to have quality education through the adoption of participatory pedagogy, good preparation and updated skills of the teachers, the use of adequate pedagogy materials, the use of mother tongue or language of the immediate environment which the child can understand and a well prepared curriculum that caters for the needs of the child. All these prepare girls and boys ready for primary level of education and also make learning to have an effective outcome.
2. The role of integrated approach in ECE, whereby the curriculum of pre-school consists of relevant sectors such as health, water- sanitation, food and nutrition, protection, safety to develop an holistic child and this is seen as a way of helping children from poor families and also make education equitable. Nearly half of the world's children especially girls from marginalised populations are likely to miss out on program that can develop their skills (cognitive, social & emotional) in early childhood. ECE equips the girl child to take advantage of development programmes capable of developing her.
3. Also, Studies have shown that early childhood development programmes help children attain a higher level of primary school enrolment & educational performance which later affects employment opportunities in life. Smooth transition to school can be of two ways: children readiness for school, this can help have smooth transition from home to school in terms of preparedness to learn and adaptation to their new learning environment. The second is the school readiness for children by ensuring that learning environment are child friendly & adapted to diverse needs of families & young learners as they enter school so it can be a great equalizer for most disadvantaged, that is those who are poor, vulnerable & marginalised.

4. Children are exposed to rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, from pre-school which children build on in subsequent years. Result from research has shown that children who are exposed to early childhood are more likely than other children, to remain in primary school & achieve good results (UNESCO, 1995). This means early childhood education will assist to ensure boys and girls complete primary school education with good learning outcomes.

What Libraries Can Do

In view of librarianship's role in achieving sustainable development goals through early childhood education, the following are recommended actions that can be done to help amplify these roles:

1. Libraries in their structures, collections and services should accommodate all categories of people inclusive of children, physically challenged, the aged, providing them with life-support skills, employment information and resources for self development.
2. Utilise emerging digital technologies for inclusive learning especially for children and people with disabilities, making the library attractive to them.
3. Spare head pledges and petitions to instigate government and development stakeholders to take actions towards ensuring free/affordable education at all levels.
4. Help children build critical thinking skills, inquiry and alpha-numeric abilities by providing them with access to videos, games and puzzles capable of doing such.
5. Serve as makerspace where children and other community members are provided with tools they need to develop vocational skills, create their own content and promote innovation hereby promoting local knowledge.
6. Ensure the total well-being of the early child by offering pregnant women/nursing mothers health information required for the proper upbringing of children.
7. Setup sensitisation programme for preschool centres, focusing on ensuring that they operate in an environment that allows children explore and stimulate rapid cognitive growth during their formative years.

Conclusions

Libraries as an information based institution are key players in the attainment of the UN global agenda. This is because of their role in the entire process of information management which is the backbone of any development plan. Beyond giving universal access to information required to meet all goals across the agenda, they provide platforms and programmes by which people "learn to learn" and become information literate, which makes development possible.

In achieving greater impacts, libraries and librarians are taking up new roles which include early childhood education. A sustained development is one that takes the future into cognisance and the cognitive development of the child is a good strategy libraries should key into. The paper reveals that achieving sustainable development goals with preference to goal 4 is factored by information literacy programmes and

early childhood education and librarianship (libraries and librarians) play a vital part in this process.

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