

QUALITY LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

IGAJAH, MAYEN NDARO

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE DEPARTMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR
deaconessmayenigajah@gmail.com

And

JOSIAH, SARAH OKPA

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE DEPARTMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR

ABSTRACT

Quality information is the bedrock of knowledge development and is expected to achieve societal and economic growth. The advent of information technology has created a new digital environment to disseminate and retrieve information from patrons. One of the most obvious trends is the rapid growth of information that changes the society and its structures. This paper takes into account the various challenges and proffered possibilities of improving IT application in libraries. The organisation of information/knowledge is an essential preliminary to its effective exploitation and dissemination. As the quality of knowledge of IT expands, the need to organise it becomes more pressing, heavy demands are being placed on library information storage and retrieval systems, which can be scarcely met by traditional methods except with the use of IT devices. The application of Information Technology (IT) service delivery in libraries still has room for improvement thereby making it impact. Therefore, this study focuses on the role of the library in quality service delivery and information literacy knowledge that would enhance economic development, acquisition of knowledge and knowledge preservation. Access to information and dissemination was pointed out as the way people seek and use information. The study concludes that the application of IT will encourage self-sufficiency in economic development among the citizenry, while being helpful in improving librarians' services in information dissemination process.

Keywords: Service Delivery, Information Technology (IT), Economic Development.

- * To encourage/value
- * To discuss/interact
- * To evaluate/judge

The elements are as follows:

TYPES OF RESEARCH

Research has become the most reliable means available to man to acquire knowledge. It is an exercise that combines intellectual skills with mechanical activities. The Advanced learner's Dictionary describes it as an *"Investigation undertaken in order to discover new facts, get additional information etc."*

Research in the Humanities is of many types. They may be classified into various groups such as exploratory, descriptive, causal, experimental or comparative, etc. Basically, three types of research are well known, viz-a-viz, historical, philosophical and empirical. The difference among the three types of research is mostly methodological.

By way of formal definition, **Research** is a systematic, organized and controlled process involving observation(s) and the analysis of such observation(s) aimed at discovering the truth. It is a scientific undertaking aimed at the understanding of objects and events in the world. Being a scientific activity, research has the characteristics of science, which are, of course, shared with non-science activities. These include such activities as:

- a) Description
- b) Discovery of the regularity of events or objects and
- c) The generation of theories and laws.

SURVEY RESEARCH

A survey gathers relatively limited data from a relatively large number of cases. The purpose is to gather information about variables rather than information about individuals. Some typical survey questions are: "What proportion of Nigerian youth graduate from secondary school?" "What proportion of Nigerian women are heads of household?" Surveys covered by this definition are often called sample surveys, probably because survey research developed as a separate research activity, along with the development and improvement of sampling procedures.

Most surveys are basically inquiries into the **status quo**. Typically, they attempt to measure what exists without questioning why it exists. Survey

questions are usually designed to provide information about variable rather than to relate variables to one another, although information gathered in surveys may point out relationships between variables. The questions asked in a survey are information-gathering questions. In brief, surveys usually seek information to be used for problem solving rather than for hypothesis testing.

A survey that covers the entire population of interest is referred to as a census. One that studies only portion of the population is known as a sample survey. However, surveys are not necessarily confined to simple tabulations of tangible objects, but may also be conducted to measure opinion, achievement, or other psychological or sociological constructs. Public opinion surveys are measuring constructs rather than tangibles. Survey research studies involve selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables.

Ex Post Facto Research

Ex post facto (after-the-fact) research is a research that is undertaken after the events have taken place and the data are already in existence. Ex post facto research, therefore, is a systematic empirical study in which the researcher does not in any way control or manipulates independent variables because the situation for study already exists or has already taken place. The research cannot manipulate the independent variables because they are not manipulable. But the research can indeed create or contrive a situation that will generate the requisite data for analysis. This is particularly so in experimentation.

On the surface, ex post facto research appears to be similar to survey research. Some authors classify it as a type of survey research because like some surveys, ex post facto research is more inclined to data fathering than to variable manipulation.

In survey research, X and Y variables are observed as properties of sample subjects who may or may not be randomly assigned to groups. Structured observation and panel discussion involve some form of direct control of the subject. However, questionnaire, personal interview and telephone methods of survey research may not involve any type of control.

CASE STUDIES

A case study is any relatively detailed description and analysis of single person, event, institution or community. As case study is concerned with

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ELEMENTS OF SOME RESEARCH FUNDAMENTALS IN THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS PREPARATION.

OLU OLAT LAWAL, Ph.D, FCLIP, FNLA
PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR
NIGERIA.

Introduction

Experiences in internal and external oral defence examinations in universities reveal varying levels of unpreparedness by some students pursuing postgraduate degrees in the content of research and supervision. It is generally known that provisions are usually made in the curriculum to include *Research Seminar in LIS* usually in 3 credit hours but the level of ignorance on methodological principles dictates the need to ensure that students are not only aware of the dictum of research but be thoroughly familiar with the tools of research. Supervisors are sometimes by-passed in the process of preparation of the study as some students pay freelance "experts" to do the work for them before showing the supervisor especially where the supervisor is already overloaded with research students. The resultant effect is lack of synergy at the defence. In the case of doctoral students, Olayinka (2005) explicitly stated the reasons for assigning supervisor(s) to research students include the following:

- a) To develop competence and confidence in doing research
- b) To guide trainees to conduct research
- c) To put pressure on students to complete their dissertation/thesis

Both parties (i.e. student and supervisor(s)) have duties and responsibilities towards ensuring the attainment of the goals of the research.

On his/her part, the student will be expected to do the following:

- * Take initiative and present to the supervisor
- * Respond to questions, challenges and requests
- * Explore alternatives for working effectively
- * To plan and execute the research project within the prescribed time period.

On the other hand, the tasks of a thesis supervisor include the following:

- * To direct/guide/push
- * To refine/focus ideas
- * To challenge/correct

levels of civilization in accordance with their own choice and values (Ake, 2001). However, scholars have identified information communication mismanagement as one of the major factors that underdeveloped Africa, they are not favourably attuned to information sources that could be beneficial to them simply because the facilities to tap this information are not available. Although, a small number of significant factors are noticed in the area of trade, economic and educational sectors and others, but the application of ICTs could be used as a medium to establish networks between members or the outside world to improve the institutional context of these communities. There was a great need to fully involve stakeholders of the society such as farmers, students, academia and policy makers/administrators. An adequate provision of infrastructural facilities, a standardized library was planned by professionals to sustain and encourage accessibility and use of information in order to transform Nigeria socio-economic system.

Accessibility to information is derived through: Instruction literacy, Acquisition of knowledge, Research and Library service delivery.

Instruction Literacy

Any societal transformation has to be through large scale development and this greatly depends on enlightenment creation, access to information and exchange of ideas globally instructor literacy is the embodiments of high level of information awareness by individual and use to better their life. It is obvious that users of information resources must possess requisite skills in order to harness information resources at their disposal. UNESCO's Information for all Programme (IFAP, 2008) has defined Information Literacy as:

The capacity of people to recognize their information needs, locate and evaluate the quality store and retrieve information make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge. The scope of Information Literacy include computer literacy, technology literacy, information technology literacy, internet literacy digital, media literacy and more.

Almost two decades ago Doyle (2001) asserted that an instruction literacy person is one who recognizes the need for information, accurate and complete information as a basis for intelligent decision making, formulate questions based on the information needs, identifies potential sources of information, accesses sources of information, including computer and other technologies; evaluate information, organizes information to

integrate new information; information existing body of knowledge and practical application and uses of information in critical thinking and problem solving. It is prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society and part of the basic human rights of lifelong learning. In highlighting the importance of instruction literacy in higher education. Dadzie (2009) stated that some fresh students entering University and colleges have limited knowledge of fundamental research and information competency skills and may not have learn how to locate information or how to use it in original work and give proper credit for the information used. University libraries should thus involved in the teaching and learning process to guide and enable students improve their literacy skills, a potential weapon for future assurance.

Instruction literacy can therefore be assumed to be the knowledge and skills necessary to correctly identify information needed to perform a specific task or unravel a problem, proficiently search for information, organize or reorganize it, interpret and advice it once it is found and retrieved (e.g. downloaded), evaluate the accuracy and consistency of the information, including morally acknowledging the sources from whence it was obtained, communicate and present.

The convergence of computers to routine data processing mainly information has become the engine for economic growth in the world. Having knowledge of information needed and duly applied tend to change people's behaviour while information literacy acquisition will help information seekers to achieve their goals. The study of Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani (2005) asserted that the real challenged of our time is not producing or storing information, but effectively use information resources for development. Information users learn to overcome information anxiety in order ot explore the available information to enable them interprets and utilized information for rational decision making. The global advancement in technology in recent years has given telecommunication a prime place in the structure of world infrastructure and development. Information availability, utilization and the increasingly global communications environment has changed the productivity level of the employees and encouraged high level achievement if properly harnessed and effectively used.

Acquisition of Knowledge

The Nigerian needs information on knowledge acquisition and retrieval. To ensure that the country is well positioned for this knowledge society, not minding the infrastructure facilities that have continually declined higher

education is expected to increased enrolments in the ICT fields of study to encourage development (Ministry of Education, 2001). For instance, Minishi-Manjaja (2007) stated that in South Africa government recognizes that ICT, human resource development is the key to the accomplishment of the ideals of the information age and better society.

For most nations, higher education is today defining the pace of economic advancement, scientific progress, social development and national integration through Research. Our Universities need alignment with national goals and aspirations by bracing up to the challenges of knowledge management. Access to library resources are so crucial to the overall intellectual, psychological development of the child whole the agencies of educational developers, namely teachers, publishers, author's parents and librarians must collectively be involved in the development of reading interest among students to ensure that it becomes a lifelong legacy of the child (Gbaje, 2008). Attitude to reading among students is not encouraging thereby minimising access to library resources due to difficulties they encounter in locating resources. The use of school library resources is supposedly to promote active learning and reading interest in order to contribute meaningfully to community growth, the responsibility of promoting and sustaining the reading interest of students must be vigorously pursued through the provision of material resources for children libraries.

Research

Economic development is encouraged when there is active research. Research entails a lot of effort that could provide a solution to economic problems facing the developing countries, particularly in the area of poverty reduction and the quality of educational development in Nigeria. Bassey, Akuegwe, Udida & Udey (2007) affirm that the importance of research cannot be overlooked in the University environment and is regarded as a major or most significant indicator of academic staff productivity. It leads to generation of new knowledge, encourages innovations, enhances the quality of teaching, increase an institution's reputation and its economic status (Sulo, Kendago, Kosgei and Chalangat, 2012). Globally, the advancement of scientific knowledge is mainly the responsibility of the University Lectures. Scholarly or scientific publications are the life blood of science and development (Hofman, Kanyengo, Rapp and Kotzin, 2009). Uthman and Uthman, (2007) stated that scholarly publications play an important role in scientific process by providing a key linkage between knowledge production and use. They are vital for knowledge sharing, dissemination of research findings and career advancement of academics.

The main objective of the library is educational where knowledge stored are retrieved for proper use, therefore, it is important that the library expands according to the evolving new trends of Information Technology (IT) and the trained professional(s) should augment the library services delivery effectively.

Information is a tool to run the affairs of the state. To further encourage access to information, the Right to Information Bill 2002 was passed by Nigerian lawmakers. Similarly, an enabling working environment will surely expedite economic development, with trickling down effect on individuals in the pursuance of their trading activities. For instance, lecturers in Nigerian Universities through their union, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have persistently agitated for adequate funding of Universities and good remuneration for its members. Stable funding would promote job security and checkmate successive brain-drain in the academia. There is need to give attention to the information and implementation of appropriate policies on funding of higher institutions particularly agricultural research institutes. Policy makers must ensure that scientists are adequately motivated to be able to use their experience, intelligence and manipulative skills to solve societal problems through research findings and recommendation to government. Policy makers must enact laws that will encourage huge investment by individual and corporate bodies geared towards enhancing development in Nigeria. To support government in achieving development professional librarians should endeavour to predict, grasp, analyse and provide relevant information for individual's use.

The Library and Service Delivery

The role of the Librarian is to collect, repackage and disseminate information for societal growth. The rapid increase in the application of computers, the internet, electronic resources, mobile devices, databases and the World Wide Web in all aspects of human activities and most importantly the educational sector justify this aim. Information processing and retrieval has become a very promising and vital component of the enabling structure for societal growth and individual's career development. This could as well be supported by University Libraries in the areas of knowledge acquisition and dissemination, even though some scholars (Emmojoroh 2000; and Opara 2008) have observed that the libraries are also confronted with numerous problems. These include declining financial support, inadequate infrastructure facilities, low levels of information technology application, obsolete materials and limited access to variety of information in the form of stored data. Nevertheless, these libraries have a

role to play by creating interfaces with the global knowledge system, tailored towards institutions and individual research development and valuable network systems.

Adequate provision of infrastructural facilities that will encourage accessibility and use of information sources in order to hasten the transformation of the Nigerian educational system from the traditional method of teaching, learning and research, and develop it to those driven by the forces of highly networked information technology. Accessibility encourages utilization of information when tools to access such information are readily available. The world information structure is constantly changing and requires human being to keep up with this development, gaining and using persistently has become indispensable for one's social and professional development. If not harnessed access to information itself is not total assurance for economic development.

Searching for adequate sources, selecting and evaluating information as well as having the ability to transform it into knowledge, remains intractable challenge. Access is determined by a combination of the availability of telecommunication infrastructure and the accessibility and affordability of Internet services. Hence, today accessibility of information is considered essential for knowledge accumulation. Accessibility is about being able to use what is available when it is required, which implies that accessibility to information networks worldwide influences the use of resources. Having knowledge of what is there with no means of obtaining it or having information technology without knowledge of how to use it does not constitute access. The availability and accessibility of information resources will therefore aid greater productivity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The infusion of information technology into all sectors of socio-economic sectors and utilization by individuals could reverse the low productivity the African countries are facing today. It is anticipated that Nigeria policy makers will give valuable insight into the provision of internet services for people to adequately access information for environmental impact Assessment, sustain the services being offered in libraries as well as areas that need improvement that would encourage greater output in an economically enhanced society.

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