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Information and Governance: The Role of the Library

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ABSTRACT

This paper is on Information and Governance: The position of the Library. The importance of information in everyday life cannot be over-emphasized. This is because adequate information is required for a success in any given venture including governance. The information appears in books, journals, technical reports, patents, official publications, reprints, theses and dissertations, micro-forms, seminars and conference, papers, magazines, newspapers etc. The primary responsibility of the library is to acquire, process, preserve, and make available all these recorded knowledge of the society to all who need them for various purposes. The society draws upon the library to satisfy its varied needs. This paper looks at the meaning of information, the importance of information and knowledge in the development of a nation, the concept of library and how the library provides information that aids governing process.

Key words: Governance, Information and Library

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world generally is seriously challenged. There is societal upheavals in every nations of the world. Wars and rumours of war fill the atmosphere. Diseases and climatic changes are not helping matters. The Nigerian case is even the worst. With insecurity (killings, kidnappings, bombing, robberies) poverty, unemployment, disasters and inequalities in wealth and opportunities, the future is quite uncertain. Acts of governance is seriously impaired. The electoral process is marred with irregularities. The leaders and the leads are all afraid. Nothing is certain anymore. The economy is in shamble.

Therefore for a societal progress, the acts of governance needs to be improved upon. This desired improvement requires adequate information and knowledge. For Hosea 4:6 says my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge while proverbs 24:5 says a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

Knowledge is built up experiences of the past. These experiences appear as information in books, journals, technical reports, patents, official publication, reprints, theses and dissertations, micro-forms, seminars and conference papers, magazines and newspapers etc. the primary responsibility of the library is to acquire, process, preserve and make available all these recorded knowledge of the society to all who need them for various purposes. The society draws draws upon the library to satisfy its varied information needs.

Governance:

Unesco International Bureau of Education (2018) defines Governance as the structures and processes designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation. According to Wikipedia, it is a process of interaction through the laws, norms, power or language of an organized society over a social system. Governance is done by the government of a state, nation or the governing council of an institution or the board of directors of a company. It is usually, practiced by the board of directors coming together to make decisions about the direction of the company, organization or institution. Their duties include strategic planning, decision making, financial planning, etc. Nationally, it is the exercise of authority or power in order to manage a country's economic, political and administrative affairs, referring to planning, implementation and monitoring functions in order to achieve pre-determined results or goals.

INFORMATION

Information is a data of value. It is the greatest purchasing power of the millennium. It is required for adequate planning. Without information, no individuals or organization can anticipate circumstance. The more information, the better an individual or business can anticipate circumstances and plan and take informed decisions. Adequate information allows people as individuals to gain practical knowledge, professional knowledge and intellectual knowledge. It allows students to improve and extend their learning process. Just as it is needed by research institutes to synthesis new data with known facts. It is also required by government authorities to formulate plans and resolve national problems. The higher the capacity to access information, the greater the learning process and the greater the ability to apply it in problem solving.

Information is stored in prints, miniaturized and electronic media and computer format. Ready access to the right information is indispensable to any individual's advancement and organizational development. The right information at the right time improves the ability of an individual, a business, a government agency or any other kind of organization.

Literature on Information and Governance

Mohammed A, Kumar S. and Das S. K (2017) in their article on Development Agenda for Good governance said that many developing countries are now considering information as tools to enhance the quality of services. Al-Shalabi (2015) said that information has brought help in improving good governance as library turns valuable data into information by getting the right information to the right user at right time and at the right place. Also that library ensures that collect information is available when required. Volpe National transportation system centre, U.S department of Transportation, Research and special program administrator (2018), in looking at the role of information professionals is of the opinion that the information specialist have the qualifications and expertise needed to provide quality and well filtered information based on specific requirements. Matarazzo and Prusak (2015) said that managers value information specialists communication skills, abilities to responde quickly to information requests and in-depth knowledge of both information sources and their organizations. They gave the following as the competencies of the information specialists of the 21st century: expert knowledge of information sources, specialized subject knowledge, ability to develop and manage convenient, accessible and cost effective services, ability to assess information needs and design services to meet those needs, ability to use appropriate information technology etc.

Below are the experts' opinion on the importance of information and knowledge in the development of any nation according to Lukman Ibrahim Disco of Bayero University, Kano:

- a. The World Bank (1999 in EGA, 2005) stated that: "Poor countries and poor-people are left behind by rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they have less knowledge".
- b. In his presentation at the final session of the NTWGs meeting" for Vision 20:2020, the minister of National Planning stated that: "Information and Knowledge will be currency of Power" (accounting for the rise of China and India in the global scenarios)
- c. The WSIS Declaration of Principles is recognition of the necessity of information and knowledge in global development. It is premised on "a common desire and commitment, to build a people-oriented information society, where: Everyone can create, access; utilize and: share information and knowledge, and where individuals, communities and people are enabled to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and, improving their quality of life (EGA, ARAPKE, 3).
- d. UN Secretary - General Kofi Annan warned that: "unless African countries become full actors in the global information revolution, the gaps between the haves and have-nots will widen, opening the possibility of increased marginalization of the continent..." (ECA/WSIS 2/2 2005).
- e. Prime Minister Tony Blair (2000) declared that: "In this new environment the most important commodities of a nation are information and knowledge.
- f. The World Bank Report concludes that: "For countries in the vanguard of the economy, the balance between knowledge and resources has shifted. Knowledge has become the most important factor determining the standard of living-more than land, than tools and than labour. Today's most technologically advanced economies are truly knowledge based". (World Bank 1998).
- g. Olowu (2004) observes that: "Information play the most critical role in any policy process and by extension, in governance".
- h. Opoku- Mensah (2007) believe that "... information is a major driver of economic change, restricting business, affecting skills and employment, contributing to growth¹ and facilitating the opening of markets through the wider and faster flow of information and knowledge".

THE LIBRARY CONCEPT

According to Donhacklord, (2013) library from the very origin of it in the ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia connotes an organized collection of items in various formats which has moved from the original cuneiform, clay tablets, goat skins and papyrus leaves to printed books, journals, microform films strips, videos, CDROM DVD, MP3 etc. Whatever format goes along with the services needed to make them available to users. The library is a place where you can obtain information and a place where you can be tele-guided to the information you as a user may need. Today, away from the description, characterization and format of the traditional library comes the electronic library, (e-library) which can be referred to as digital or virtual library.

THE VALUE OF LIBRARY IN GOVERNANCE

1. Library as an information agency:

It was Ojedokun (2007) who said that information is the fourth factor of production. It is not only power but the greatest currency of the millennium. It is a data of value. It is the bedrock of any society. It provides a guide for various complex and competing interest groups in the society. Information is not independent of our social practices. It serves as a reliable basis for adequate successful behaviour. Without information, no individual or business can anticipate circumstances. Information feeds anticipation. The more information, the better an individual or business can anticipate and therefore make

informed decision. People or business that can properly or better anticipate their circumstances become master of circumstances, while those that cannot properly or better anticipate their circumstances become victims of circumstances. These also include government. Information is necessary for the user to gain practical knowledge, professional knowledge and intellectual knowledge. Business organizations need information to forecast the market trends, develop new products or adapt new technology just as it is required by students to improve and extend their learning process. It is also needed by research institutes to synthesis new data with known facts as a part of creative process and by government authorities to formulate plans and refine decision making and to anticipate and resolve national problems. Information improves learning process in every field. The higher the capacity to find and access information, the greater the learning process and the ability to apply it in problem solving.

Information being a very important resource has to reach everyone for proper development of the environment, community and the society at large. Infact, information is indispensable especially for community development, which is a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the government authorities to improve economics, social and cultural condition of the communities, to integrate these communities in the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to the national progress. Information is stored in print, miniaturized and electronic media and computer format. The library acquires, organizes, interprets, preserves and stores these information carrying media for easy access and consultation. Ready access to this information is indispensable to any individual's advancement and national development. The right information at the right time at the right place improves the ability of an individual, a business, a government agency or any other kind of organization, to make an informed decision. Historically, libraries and librarians have played major role in creating, accumulating, organizing and dissemination of information. They are therefore the key players in moving fostering the information society.

2. Library is a Conservator of Knowledge:

Knowledge is applied information or better still, information provides knowledge. Knowledge can be a personal knowledge that exists in the mind of an individual and is only available to no one except through answers to questions or letters or it can be a social knowledge possessed collectively by the society, available to its members through records like books, journals, technical reports, patents, official publications, preprints, reprints, Theses and dissertations, microfilms, seminars and conference papers etc. The primary responsibility of the library is to acquire, process and preserve the recorded knowledge of the society for later use. The society draws upon its library to satisfy its varied needs. Knowledge and advanced skills are critical determinant of a country's economic growth. Knowledge - driven economies demand higher level skills in the workforce. The skills of a nation's workforce and the quality of its infrastructure are what make the nation unique. A workforce that is knowledgeable and skilled can easily transport the fruit of its labour into the global economy just as an individual competitive in the job market will depend more on his acquisition and application of knowledge. Because library helps in the development of learning and knowledge, it therefore has a role to play in the transmission of knowledge which helps to achieve the economic and social objectives of the government.

3. Library is an agency for education

Library is an agency through which millions of illiterate masses get access to books and become literate: the neo-literate and school drop outs get avenues to be qualified, and the educated get enlightened through knowledge and information and directly or indirectly could be able to develop themselves and develop the country. Therefore library is an agency of civilization of a nation. Let us take example according to Chaudhary (2008), Great Britain, Cuba and Japan achieved 98%, 97.3% and 97% qualified persons respectively because libraries were established in every nook and corner of these countries.

Every individual member of these countries gets access to books and becomes qualified.

Libraries are service oriented informal education and community centres. They equally help to support the civic and cultural activities of group and organizations. Their aim is also to encourage wholesome recreation and constructive use of leisure time, thus the library is an indispensable social institution.

4. Libraries increase the value of human capacity output in every field. They enhance access to professional information processing, storage and dissemination function. Coupled to this is the fact that public libraries have a solid tradition of outreach services. This means taking the library to the people (mobile libraries) so that they would read to illiterates in their communities, translate, interpret, photocopy, ask and answer question concerning their business, trades, jobs including the artisans.

5. Library being an important social component of information, communication and knowledge, it is required to play an active role in every society, to help in the acceleration of all developmental activities. It is therefore an important social instrument with potential to push every major task of development of the nation. Library is the main agency for the development of literacy, awareness and functionality.

Conclusion

Information being a data of value is required in governance as it is required for adequate planning implementation and execution. It is required by government authorities to formulate plans and resolve national problems. The higher the capacity to access information, the greater the planning process and the greater the ability to apply it in problem solving.

Library is the store house of information and information professional are the information managers and the knowledge cerators. The library is therefore an indispensable social institution of the nation that must be accorded its pride of place for adequate governance.

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