

Role of Library and Information Science Professionals towards Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Introduction

Industrialization of every state of the world is not achievable in this present decade/era, otherwise known as 21st century, if there is rancor and disorderliness in the society. Industrialization is a concept that represents a state of massive development in all spheres of human endeavors vis-à-vis increase in physical infrastructures, social amenities and advanced technological development. This trend of industrialization occurs in states with social and economic stability. Industrialization according to Britannica Encyclopedia is, “The process of converting to a socio-economic or development in which industry is dominant”.

Industrialization is as old as man on earth; this is so as human culture and practices has continually been overturned by human growth and creation. According to Shelton (2007) it is “the process by which an economy is transferred from primarily agricultural, to one based on the manufacturing of goods, individual manual labor is often replaced by mechanized mass production, and craftsmen are replaced by assemblymen. However, no industrialization takes place in the absence of adequate re-orientation, re-education and re-strategizing.

Re-orientation and re-education has a lot in common and in relation with information activities, functions and services at the disposal of the citizenry such as the leaders (those in authority), and followers (those being led), while re-strategizing entails the formulation of new policies, paradigms, techniques meant to guide or change the processes of rendering existing functions and services. What is therefore is the place of library and information science in ensuring social, economic stability and sustainable industrialization? This is the crux of this paper.

Library and information science: a two-way medium for social, political stability and sustainable industrialization

Recent developments in the world educational environment have witnessed massive revolution in academic disciplines in such a way that curriculums and course contents of what is being taught students in all spheres of academic institutions are being modified to suit the rapidly changing world activities. In line with this the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education have similarly had cause to initiate changes in its educational curriculum to tele-guide the activities of the various disciplines or courses offered in Nigerian institutions either in a university, polytechnic, college of education, research institutes, and even secondary schools. Furthermore, disciplines such as Library and Information Science have over the years been

modified or restructured to accommodate novel trends, opinions and ideologies. Library Information Science Education in Nigeria today cannot be relevant without effective preparation of new generation of librarians to effectively use the new information and communication technology in their professional practices. For many library and information science schools as enumerated by Nwalo (2000) this doubting task requires the acquisitions of new resources, expertise and careful planning. To buttress the aforementioned view, the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) an arm of the Federal Ministry of Education has vigorously pursued the modification and restructuring of Library and Information Science teaching course contents (LRCN bulletin: 2014). In the words of Minishi-Majanja (2007) Education and training of LIS professionals has to be such that it empowers them to unleash their potential as they endeavor to offer relevant and efficient services within the current levels of technological sophistication

These formidable reforms in library school curriculums over the years paved way for the inclusion and diversification of the discipline into different areas such as Information Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), E-learning, Digital Resources, Entrepreneurship Studies, Cloud Resources, Digital/Electronic Learning and Services, etc. These inclusions however justify the opinion of Edegbor (2011) that it is inarguable that developments in our society technological or otherwise have brought significant changes to library and information science (LIS) education all over the world. Among all the changes in LIS education, the ones that are most visible and observable can be found in the LIS curricula. However, Chu (2006) buttressed that, the curriculum for LIS education usually mirrors what is being offered to train librarians and information professionals' knowledge and skills to become qualified personnel in the field, but also meet challenges of the ever changing information society. It is however pertinent to note that these inclusions in curriculum heralded new service/function sometime and nomenclature'' such as information scientist, systems librarian, archivist, etc. thus, heralding a new professional paradigm, such that there is an observable change in the morale, capacity, capability, attitude/disposition, creativity of librarians; specifically in dispensing their duties.

Theoretical propeller for change in libraries and librarians

These changes in the discipline, curriculum and professional ethics, the writers of this paper are of the view was propelled by intuitive rationalizing such as:

- 1) Libraries and librarians will be left with scars if new trends are not embraced.
- 2) Libraries should employ, train and motivate staff members on library connectivity and technological applications.
- 3) Train staff members on how to understand the library and its services in the 21st century and beyond.
- 4) Establishment of audio visual coders and electronic libraries to reclaim or recall users already lost to commercial vendors.
- 5) Training of librarians to understand the technologies (ICT) and how to apply them practically in relating with their clients and commodity they are meant to serve.

These projections above the writers opined has in no small measure re-energized library and information science as a discipline vis-à-vis a profession endeared to others.

Practical role of library and information science professionals towards sustainable industrialization in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship:

Trained librarians no longer belong to the class of the oppressed or rather the victims; librarians now are beacons of hope, as small scale enterprises, companies, state of art construction, firms' vis-à-vis research institutes where library skills and functions are presently marketed both locally and internationally. This trend heralded socio-economic status for libraries vis-à-vis job creation for the Nigerian state.

Denouncement of class consciousness towards information use:

Information resources available and access to information contents have been a prerogative of the rich in the society, because the facilities (libraries) were rare and few; the facility were static unmovable; use of outdated techniques and tools, information managers initial lackadaisical attitude towards novel innovations. Revolutionary strides in library and information science as a discipline and a profession such as the:

- i. Application and use of modern information gadget in information centers (libraries) functions and services
- ii. Conversion of library information resources to non-physical information materials

Enhanced distribution of library information resources through different medium:

There is no gainsaying the fact that the provision of information bearing materials by librarians to all citizens irrespective of class, title, age, etc. has helped often times to reduce/calm social restiveness. As the saying goes, "an un-informed man is deformed".

School visitation and public orientation activities:

Authorities in librarianship have earlier propounded the theory of taking the "Reference Desk to the Side Walk", which implies that library practices and services should be taken out of the library premises to the classrooms, market places, public parks, etc. In line with the above, recent happenings in Nigerian educational, social and political circles juxtaposes that librarians have taken to the streets, classrooms, public parks sensitization packages notably in terms of public lectures and career guidance and counseling. Observations of recent trends by the writers has exposed that librarians from John Harris Library UNIBEN and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe Library UNN, has at different times whilst celebrating library week programme of Nigeria Library Association, visited and held interactive sections with pupils of different primary and secondary schools aimed at ensuring an adequate/effective use of information resources at their disposal.

Conclusion

A Plethora of problems tends to derail the accomplishments for a sustainable industrialized economy/society for the Nigerian state. This is so as the numerous negative antecedents of ignorance, lack of access to adequate information sources vis-à-vis lack of awareness of existing information sources and facilities prompts negative societal phenomenon such as:-

1. Corruption,
2. Directionless government policies,
3. Ethnicity,
4. Religious intolerance,
5. Militancy,
6. Insurgency,
7. Boundary dispute, etc.

All these negative societal norms do not pave way for social and political stability vis-a-vis sustainable industrialization in any state. However, this paper is recommending the following steps for better societal growth and industrialization.

- a. All inclusiveness of notable professions specifically Library and Information Science in the event of national and educational curriculum formulation,
- b. Enhancement of existing Information centers (Facilities, Beautification, Expansion etc) for example the libraries,
- c. Training, re-training of information center staff vis-à-vis providing motivational packages/incentives especially for those in rural areas,
- d. Establishing/ Building and equipping libraries in rural settlements
- e. Librarians should become more proactive and daring in providing access to information resources,
- f. Government should adequately bring under control the unstable rag tag economic downfall, specifically the free falling Naira rates.

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