HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT: E-LIBRARY INNOVATIONS AS A PANACEA

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Abstract
The advancement of every individual or nation is a reflection of the quality of education imbibed. This paper examined the unique roles played by e-libraries; the harnessing of digital technologies as infrastructure in achieving libraries objectives for the development of human capital. Using the literature search methodology the highlighted roles are adjudged as panacea to human capital development.

Education is a vital agent of national development and the library plays a major role amongst individuals and the society as a whole in the promotion of literacy by making materials and information readily available to all thereby optimizing human development and eradicating poverty as a result. A nation's development is highly dependent on the extent of citizen's level of and access to information through quality education.

The library can be seen as an extension of education. Education and library are two inseparable indivisible concepts, meaning that one cannot exist without the other. A good well equipped library is sine qua non for the intellectual, moral and spiritual advancement and elevation of the people of a nation.

Bukenya (2004) in his presentation at the standing conference of Eastern, Central and southern Africa Librarians meeting argued that information for literacy arms the masses to see their own needs and problems and discuss means of solving them. Any nation that wants to shake off its syndrome of poverty and be self reliant must accept that education backed with information obtained from libraries cannot be over-emphasized. Organizing a library to re-generate education calls for an atmosphere in which information can be located, accessed and retrieved through a faster and more dynamic way. The reality that no single library can be self sufficient in terms of its resources and services has given birth to library development in two complimentary directions. First is the networking of the libraries which ensures that network members

make up for short falls from the strength of others. The second direction is the building of an e-library. The pooled resources are made available electronically to each library site using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Thus, such libraries have the potential for regenerating education by providing the latest and comprehensive resources and delivering it instantaneously to users. Information and Knowledge are crucial assets in a nation's development.

Nations are creating strategies to ensure that information and knowledge are used effectively, shared and made accessible. Digital Information and Communication technologies have regenerated education and revolutionized the way in which knowledge moves around the world.

Correia (2002) posited that those people who currently have poor access to information will become further marginalized once basic computer and information skills turn out to be more and more important for personal advancement and economic success.

Emergence of E-Library and Its Role In Regenerating Education

The expression, "Virtual library" is relatively new – one of the writers who coined it is Nancy Schiller who defined it in 1992, simply as "Libraries in which computer and telecommunication technologies make access to a wide range of information resource possible". It is often referred to as 'digital library' or 'electronic library', 'community network', or 'simply library without walls'. It is called 'virtual' because in a good electronic wide area networked library, the user enjoys the euphoria of being able to access collection in distant libraries and yet he has not physically moved.

A traditional library is simply a place (building or room) where books and related resources are kept and used for promoting learning. The "place" can be "real" (non virtual) or "virtual". The "Virtual" denotes a representation of reality. This has given rise to the concept of virtual reality when electronic library idea subscribes. The need for a library system has therefore become a most urgent necessity in regenerating a nation's education system. According to **Nokwe** (2001), an electronic library is a library that harnesses digital technologies as infrastructure to search, collect, organize, store and distribute cultural, historical and scientific information. Digital libraries make it possible for electronic books and journals to be accessible to unlimited audience at the same time, anytime anywhere.

The world today is passing through a lot of changes virtually in every field of human endeavor. Every nation is clamoring for quality education and e-library service has a unique role to play in ensuring quality education at any level of education in Nigeria.

The virtual library project is a justifiable venture for bolstering and regenerating education. It will enable the masses to profit more fully from electronic

communications revolution by having access to data base critical for their research and teaching. In addition, the virtual library would regenerate education by promoting the use of information and communication technologies to deliver education to the doorsteps of those who yearn for it. Libraries being "not only an information system but also a communication system, the more complex the society is in its bureaucratic and educational requirements, the greater its dependence upon library based information services" (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002, p. 38).

Virtual Libraries Combat Poverty

According to a UNDP report (1998), about 54% of Africa's population is estimated to live in absolute poverty. Currently in Nigeria, rapid changes and vigorous developments in IT are occurring, changing Nigerians way of life as well as the economic strength, national power and international competitiveness. The status of a country or nation in the global political and economic framework depends on the general role of the development and progress of IT. With development and innovation going hand in hand and knowledge becoming one of the most important factors in determining standard of living, most development countries today are those that play the knowledge card using the virtual library as tools in regenerating education for poverty eradication and natural development.

Reducing poverty and optimizing national development require more than simply raising national incomes. They involve people being able to realize those basic capabilities that enable them to develop to full potential and lead productive and creative life. Information and knowledge are critical and strategic resources in human development which include literacy acquisition and poverty reduction. The rural and urban poor required access to appropriate information to fight poverty, deprivation and illiteracy. Several experts have grouped the information required to fight poverty and illiteracy into two categories:

✓ Survival information, which is related to health, housing, income, legal protection, economic opportunity, political rights etc.
✓ Citizen action information, which is needed for effective participation as individuals or members of a group in the social, political, legal and economic process (Bunch 1982, Meula – Meza 2005).

The Millennium Development Goals highlight the need to address development in an integrated manner to achieve real development gains for the poor by 2015. Information and knowledge are the least in achieving these monumental but vital goals. For instance, better knowledge gives people more opportunities for improved health, through enabling people understand and employ preventive strategies and more effective use of curative treatments. Similarly, knowledge also affords opportunities to improve income generation thereby reducing poverty. The poorest and most vulnerable people need access to reliable information so that during difficult times they can opt for the best survival strategy.

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In this information age, there is now more than ever a need to regenerate education in order to equip people with the skills and means to become information literate and enable them to locate, access and evaluate information.

Libraries and National Development

In classical terms, the purpose of development is to attain increase productivity for economic growth. Economic growth has not however provided solution to rural exodus, marginalization of the weak, galloping urbanization, mass unemployment increased poverty and spread of deadly diseases. Development in all fields of human endeavor is a goal that all nations of the world strive to attain. The 2010 report of the United Nation's development Programme (UNDP) ranked Nigeria 142nd out of 169 countries in an assessment of human development indicators. (UNDP; 2010).
Development of human resources is key element for improvement of any organization, society or nation (Khan, 2003). Libraries can play direct as well as catalystic role in contemporary development initiatives. Libraries role, though not comprehensive are outlined below:

1.   Libraries Harness Information and Knowledge: Libraries increase the value of human intellectual output by increasing access to them through professional processing, storage and dissemination, processing and organizing more ideas. The world's intellectual output would be useless, even constitute a nuisance if libraries were not there to gather, analyse, classify, catalogue and provide access to them. The hundreds of bibliographic records of published and unpublished materials ensure their use and re-uses to satisfy commercial, educational, cultural and recreational needs.

2.   Catalyst for Economic Development at Local and National Levels: As both the global and national economies become more and more knowledge driven, specialized knowledge has become the indispensable asset for further development. Local business benefit greatly in specific ways from libraries including access to new ideas, knowledge and information; studies suggest that for any nation to be effective in the global economy, its institutions of higher learning must do more that just prepare and educate the workforce and expand knowledge through research.
They must get involved in local economic development (Matson et al 1995)

3.   Critical in the Education Process and Continuing Development of Intellectual Capital: The educational and research roles of libraries cannot be over – emphasized. Research has found that e-libraries make significant contributions to the effectiveness of regenerating education. Learners from institutions where library and ICT use are part of the learning process are more likely to become equipped for the society and occupational effectiveness than those without proper library and ICT habits. Libraries are central for the development of intellectual capital of a community, an attribute which initiates a ripple effect on an individual's ability when employed. Community members use library services for everything from introducing their children to the habit and joy of reading, to tapping into their professional networks. McClure, Charles R., Bruce T. Fraser, Timothy W. Nelson, & Jane B. Robbins. (2000).

4.   Social Inclusion and Cohesion, Participation and Empowerment: Libraries perform an important role of social inclusion when they serve the needs of the disadvantaged populations such as the poor, the elderly, the physically disabled, the unemployed and those with leaning disability, because these are exactly assets just as information sources, computer and internet access (CILIP, 2002). Libraries also serve as agents of social cohesion. In one study, a participant said: "we are brought closer to other members of our community through the very act of sharing information with them" (Usherwood and Toyne, 2000). For this reason, social inclusion and lifelong learning agenda of most developed countries include the founding of e – libraries and increased information and library provision for learners at all levels and for all ages.

5.   Essential Element of Physical Development: Research also found out that communities value their libraries as physical assets and source of community pride. Indeed, libraries especially e-libraries and public libraries are important landmarks in many cities and other communities. Participants in a survey stated many times that the presence of a new library, or the redevelopment of an existing one, favourably impacted on its immediate surroundings (Albense, 2001; CLIP, 2002; McClure, Charles R., Bruce T. Fraser, Timothy W. Nelson, & Jane B. Robbins. (2000).

6.   Libraries and Citizen Empowerment, Democracy and e – Government: Libraries offer real and virtual civic spaces where citizens can speak freely, share similar interests and concerns pursue what they believe are in their interest. Through this role, libraries prevent lack of information and idea exchanges which in a closed society stifles creativity, suppresses the imagination and creates a barrier to social, economic and technical progress (Berger, 1991).

        E- Government is about using the power of information technology to provide better public services. Governments have always depended on libraries to collect and disseminate government information, but e – government adds very new dimensions. The citizen empowering potential is been reinforced by virtual access and there is the possibility to hold governments accountable without physical confrontation.

Conclusions

        With the preponderance that no library can be self sufficient in resources and services for meeting the needs of its clienteles, even with networking that make up for deficiencies, the innovations for the establishments of e – libraries has a regenerating potentials that creates platform for information to be located, accessed and retrieved through a faster and make dynamic way.

        It is suggested that the policy makers, stakeholders provide adequate funding for more infrastructural materials, training and retraining of personnel. The provision of conducive environment for clienteles is sine qua non for the total quality development and elevation of the human resources of a nation.

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