Library science education, social work interventions and national development

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Abstract

Crucial as social work has become in the equation of having a developed society, it still has to leverage on other unique human endeavours, one of which being library science education. This article takes a look at the relationship between library science education and social work with the aim of establishing how library science education can enhance the effectiveness of social workers in the discharge of their duties. Based on extensively reviewed literature, it is argued in the article that since library science education is concerned with effective storage, preservation and retrieval of data and social work most times rely on data for its effectiveness in causing national development, there exist a strong relationship between library science education and social work intervention for national development. The following are identified and discussed as areas the two disciplines relate: data gathering, general research, information sourcing and information preservation. The conclusion is that the two disciplines must work together in the push towards national development. Hence, it is recommended, among others, that library science education stakeholders should work towards creating effective, rich and easily accessible library and that in the cause of their duties, social work stakeholders should give primacy to patronizing library, for the purposes of data gathering and storing.

Keywords: Library Science Education, Social Work, Data Management, National Development, Information Preservation

Introduction

The place of information keeping is indispensable in development and fortunately, it is increasingly gaining serious traction in development efforts and campaigns. While this traction may just becoming obvious in development projects of developing nations like Nigeria, it appears it has always been a recurrent decimal in the development progrommes of developed nations (Ahmed et al., 2020). Development progenitors with perfunctory interest or essence can afford to embark on development haphazardly, in event of which, they delve into development programme or project without recourse to information generated from past realities. In most cases, such development efforts are usually a debacle (Musa et al., 2021).

The overarching necessity for safe information and record keeping had necessitated the establishment of the first library. Library scholars may hold different opinions with regards which was the first library, some agreed that the first library was the Library of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh in present day Iraq (Andrew, 2023), others say it was the Library of Alexandria in Egypt (Malik, 2014). Malik (2014) however observed that there are evidences pointing to the probable existence of libraries in Nineveh and Nippur around the 700 BC and 1900 BC. Other ancient libraries recognised by library science as laying the foundations of modern day library include: the Library of Pergamum, located in present day Turkey; the Library Villa of the Papyri, located in present day Roman City; the Libraries of Trojan's Forum, located in Rome; the Library of Celsus, in Rome; the Imperial Library of Constantinople in Byzantine Empire; and the House of Wisdom Library, in Iraq (Andrew, 2023; Udo-Anyanwu, 2015; Malik, 2014).

Besides the need to safeguard the originality of messages and record keeping for historical purposes, another primary reason for the establishment of early libraries was firm for the king and empire or kingdom establishing them. These primary reasons combined have today taken the backseat allowing reasons that were secondary in the early days of library establishment, take the front seat. These secondary reasons are: wisdom, virtue, intelligence and knowledge (Ameh, 2015; Malekabadizadeh et al. 2009). People build library and maintain libraries in the hope of that when people patronize it, it will make them wise, make them virtuous, improve their intelligence and knowledge which will inadvertently impact the society

positively in the area of socialization, integration, cultural tolerance and especially in the area of growth and development.

Hinting that the need for socialization, integration, cultural tolerance, growth and development, are the tertiary reasons for the establishment of libraries, Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2022) observed that though information and record safe keeping started library, it is the secondary and tertiary importance of libraries to human endearvours with its strong bearings on development that has necessitated the proliferation of libraries across continents and nations of the world. Almost every nation has a national library, every educational institution has academic libraries, almost every subnational divide like states and in some cases even local government areas, own a library or two. Time was when a place for the storing of written works defined a library. Though this definition still holds sway today, it is not regarded as encompassing (Zhang, 2017). It is not regarded as encompassing because a lot has changed some of which being the reality that a place now assumes different definition, libraries no longer hold just written material and the concept of proper organisation of material for effective retrieval has become a must for public libraries.

A more encompassing and accepted conceptualization of library is that library is an organised assemblage of materials that contain resourceful information that is not just of benefit to a distinct community, but is also available to members of that community (Ou, 2017; Malik, 2014). Today libraries are no longer just physical buildings, some are virtual spaces and others are a combination of both. Modern libraries do not just offer books, but other such things as periodicals, manuscripts, maps, videotapes, DVDs etc. A number of library types exist according to purpose, audience, ownership, profession and method of access. Consequently, there exist public libraries, which is opened to every member of the public; children libraries, which is a special collection of resource materials that treats issues in a way understood and appealing to juveniles; national libraries, established and managed by the central government of a country for use by its citizens or people domicile in the country; reference libraries, which chiefly contain materials that must be used within the library and not borrowed or taken out by members of the public; special libraries, which house holdings that tend to specific professions; electronic library, which is accesses virtually and academic library, which are owned by tertiary educational institutions to support not just the curriculum in the school, but research in the institution (Musa et al. 2015; Joy et al., 2018).

The mere existence of a library is one thing and the library being useful and accessible in ways that hold promise is another thing. This reality gave birth to the Library Science Education which elementarily is a discipline that involves the management, economy and dissemination of knowledge (Igwela & Nsirim; 2017). Library science education is more a multidisciplinary endeavours because of its appeal or interaction not only with the primary offerings of the library like, collection, organanisation and dissemination of resources in its holdings, but more so because of its interactions and appeal to such fields as management, education, information technology and Development studies.

A peculiar concern of development studies is national development which often implies the equitable experience of progress and growth in the basics of life, by all aspects of a country (Obaro, 2015). The trend in national development is sustainability, which harps on the ability of current generation to meet their ends without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Researches by the following scholars Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2022) and Okafor et al. (2022) have shown that meeting national development usually comes by in bits of intervention projects or works facilitated by such development catalysts like social work. How library science, a discipline with significant bearing on development helps social work, yet another discipline with significant bearings on development, in the achievement of national

development is the focus of this study. Past works that x-ray the contributions of library science to national development had a linear approach between the two variables, creating a gap in knowledge on how the activities of a go-between development facilitator affects the effectiveness of library science education in creating or causing national development and on how library science education can be tailored to help development facilitators like social works, in effectively causing national development. Besides its introduction, this article is divided into seven subheads. The subheads are: theoretical framework, library science education and national development, the concept of social work intervention and national development, the nexus between library science education and social work interventions for national development, conclusion, recommendations and references.

Theoretical framework

Given the novelty of the article, it is difficult to effectively establish the discourse within the construct of a particular theory on Library Science education. For this reason, this article is premised generally within the social theories of library studies and particularly on the postulations of the following theories and philosophies: theory of practice, critical realism theory, Foucault discourse and Freirean perspective. The general postulations of social theories of library science education is that the library exist to serve the society, by way of managing knowledge for easy consumption by the community or society it serves (Stoke, 2010; Eryaman, 2010; Rosenbaum, 2010). The theory of practice was propounded by Jean Lave in 1988. According to Talja (2010), Lave pioneered his theory in his book titled *Cognition in Practice,* where, leveraging on the findings of a number of empirical studies on problem solving in mundane and everyday situation, postulated that cognition lies outside the mind in activities and culturally organized settings; for this reason it always involves other actors.

Approaching the interrelatedness of library science and society from the textual point of view, Michel Foucault argued their relevance in an article titled: Discourse, power/knowledge and the battle for truth. In this article, Foucault, tending towards social contructivist ideas expressed in Marxian and Structuralist traditions, contended that specialised language developed by a community defined by culture, profession or academic at a particular point in space and time is instrumental to causing change than a focus on conversation between individuals. Olsson (2010) explains that according to Foucault discourse, knowledge is easily shared among and between committee members when they are united on a common concern.

Critical realism theory as propounded by Roy Bhaskar recognizes the existence of the real, ontological reality and the elusiveness of clear discernment of reality. According to Budd (2010), this theory recognized three domains in social reality, the domains of real, actual and empirical. The theory holds that social reality is created by three variables, mechanism, events and experience where the real domain features all three, the actual domain feature only events and experience and the empirical domain feature just experience. Freirean developed educational approach that applies significantly to the educational concerns of this article. The approach is the critical pedagogy and revolutionary educational practice which leveraging on the debates on library pedagogy, communicative action, critical pedagogy, community-based learning and dialogic community-based perspective on library with the traditional static viewpoint, sued for a transformative and community-based library (Riedler & Eryaman, 2010). The relevance of these theories to the thrust of this article are their recognition that library science alone cannot bring about national development – theory of practice; that knowledge is best shared among community during conscious and continued interfaces – Foucault Discourse; that empirical knowledge and reality is instrumental to change – Critical realism; and that transformative and community-based library are instrumental to achieving development that reflect the unique concerns of a given community.

Library science education and national development

Knowledge is key and indispensable in national development. While the conceptualization of knowledge vary according to individual, the general idea that knowledge is a good thing and a necessity for growth and development suffices in much the same way as the conception of knowledge as awareness or understanding of a variable or situation gotten courtesy of experience or some vicarious means (Ekong & Ekong, 2018). Expressed differently, knowledge is premised on facts, information, and skills gained through practical or theoretical learning. Knowledge is useful, interrelated and none is wasted. An endeavour of mankind that is keen on knowledge management is library science (Musa et al., 2021). Omehia (2019) conceive of library science education as encompassing knowledge management, knowledge economy and knowledge dissemination thus establishing the place of library science education within the precinct of information based courses.

Library science education basically covers the circumference of knowledge management since it features significantly in knowledge creation, building, storage, retrieval and usage. In generating materials for studies in library science and for proper understanding of the contributions of library science to human existence, library science education contributes to the creation of knowledge (Ekong & Ekong, 2018); in training people on the various facets of library management, library science education contributes to knowledge storing and retrieval (Priti & Jibril, 2018); and in consciously encouraging the patronage of certain knowledge, through conferences, deliberate efforts at making a certain kind of information available at some libraries, and the cross fertilization of idea among professions, library science education contribute to the usage of knowledge (Obizue & Obizue, 2016).

National development is one of the major areas of human concerns that library science education holds great potentials. This is so because of the two key roles libraries play around the world. First being the role of knowledge management and the second being the role of information storing, provision and ease of retrieval. As had been established already, knowledge is key to development. Knowledge is central to the edification of the mind which is a prerequisite for maturity, quest for more knowledge and the sinew to challenge inertia, mediocrity and tendency towards complacency. The aforementioned variables produced ideas that, if pursued, can lead to development. Informed decision is a proof of knowledge and access to certain kind of information. Both are key determinants of any kind of development (Ekong & Ekong, 2018). Library science education as an endeavour manages information for public good. Musa et al. (2020), contends that library science has a major role to play in ensuring national development in Nigeria especially when one appreciates the reality of the world being a global village where every aspect of development is information based. For Saka et al (2018), the current realities of the present day society have introduced a fifth factor of production – information – in addition to the already existing four production factors of Land, Labour, Capital and Entreprenuer. These scholars contend that information as a factor of production is considered of high importance owing to the fact that information affects every sphere of human life.

The concept of development has different definitions. It is linked to such concepts as change, growth and advancement. Though its pendulum swings either ways – positive and negative – it is generally desired in the positive. The concept of national development is one that suggests positive change, growth or advancement at a national level, but this kind of development is highly dependent on personal and professional development which scarcely happens without the contributions of a good library made possible by library science education (Musa et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020, Ameh, 2015). National development entails the visible impact of the country on the happiness of its inhabitants. Like every other form of development,

it is a continuous process and it is manifested via certain indices like the improvement in infrastructure provision; healthcare delivery; reduced poverty ratio, enhanced literacy level among others (Musa et al., 2015; Joell & Ayinla, 2015). The type of national development encouraged by development scholars and the international community is one that is sustainable and encompassing (Abdulwahab 2015). Sustainable development harps on the ability of present generation to consistently meet its development needs without compromising the ability of the future generations to do so. Encompassing concerns sue that national development be one that touches on every aspect of the nation's life like the social, political, cultural and economic.

Facilitating information availability, storage and retrieval on social, political, cultural and economic realities that have bearing on the nation is one way library science can contribute to national development. Another way is managing knowledge such that knowledge that are beneficial to the people because of its development potentials are readily available while those that are not are quarantine (Ameh, 2015). Spearheading the cross fertilization of ideas among professions is one way library science education can take the wheel on information and knowledge creation and management for national development.

The concept of social work and intervention for national development

Though it has existed for a long while, social work intervention started gaining traction as a distinct discipline in recent times (Okafor et al. 2022). Wilbard (2016) notes that be it as a profession or an academic discipline, social work as known today has a relative recent origin, owing to its emergence at a time when capitalism was slowly and steadily replacing the disintegrating feudalism. The birth of social work in Nigeria as documented by Alamu (2022) is traced to the reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation needs of the country after the Nigerian Civil war. For Mbah et al, (2017), Decree 12 promulgated in 1974 to establish social welfare services as part of the Social Development Directorate was a massive step at recognizing social work. The justification for this assertion is that the services were to enhance the coordination of intergovernmental welfare programmes, conduct research with interest in social welfare and organize welfare agency trainings as well as social worker training.

Social work holds lots of potentials for national development, not because there exist some linear relationship between the two, but because first, the sum of social work activities, projects and intervention programmes go a long way in enhancing national development; second, social work is a content and context induced services and third, social work has concrete interface and relevance with multiple disciplines. Social work intervention programmes are indispensable in national development because they touch on the social, political, cultural and economic aspects of the nation's life and their programmes are tailored in bits to reflect the developmental concerns in these aspects of the nation's life. When applied to national development, social work does not have a one plan or project fits all approach, it pays attention to the unique realities of a given situation needing development intervention and comes up with a programme that will address these challenges taking into account the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programme targets and beneficiaries (Rwomire, 2021; Amadasun, 2019).

Contributing to national development through intervention programmes, social work performs four distinct functions: research, project creation, project execution and generation of data. A properly plan social work intervention is research based. Scarcely is any good social intervention work achieved with haphazard approaches that relegate research to the background (Bassey et al. 2020). In tackling a developmental issue, it is ideal of social work to approach it by first enquiring into the nature of the development challenges, the impact of the development challenges, the causal factors of the development challenges and the best possible ways of

sustainably tackling the existing developmental problems. Guided by the findings of the research, the next stage of social work intervention for national development is the creation of an intervention programme. This may be in form of a project that involves infrastructure construction or it may be in the form of campaign that seeks to dislodge unfriendly development orientations and practices (Amadasun, 2019). Whatever the intervention programme may be, scholars and experts including Okafor et al. (2022) Alumu (2022) and Bassey et al. (2020), hold that the effectiveness of the programme is tied to an extent, on the level to which the progrramme recognizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the beneficiaries. Besides research and creation of intervention programmes, social work through its workers contributes to national development by executing development programmes. A social worker should be well versed by reason of training in the execution of different development programmes. In achieving its first three responsibilities on national development, social work directly and indirectly generate data that become raw materials and framework for the execution of similar development projects. The data too become literature for further research into the development challenge or challenges.

Nexus between library science education and social work interventions for national development

On the surface, library science and social work are worlds apart, but on a closer look, they share some similarities and need each other even though they are uniquely different. Both disciplines exist not so much for themselves but also for others. While social work is always on a mission to include itself in some other field in its efforts at achieving a desired social goal, library science manages the activities of other discipline so members of the discipline and interested members of the public may benefits time and again from the goals and success of that discipline. If one agrees with the conception of social work as social engineering discipline that is on a mission and goal of promoting social change and intervention in a mirage of ways(Bassey et al., 2020) then it suffices to describe library education as the storehouse of engineering apparatus and equipment. As relates to the nexus between library science education and social work intervention for national development, library science performs four unique functions: equipping work force with the needed information, storage of information, facilitating the retrieval of information and facilitating the creation of certain kinds of information/knowledge.

Equipping work force with the needed information: Social work intervention programmes need information for them to work effectively and library science is in the information and knowledge management business. A properly equipped library that contains up-to-date information on social work development programmes is a necessity and an indispensable tool to social workers that are in the business of national development (Mbah et al., 2017; Joy, et al., 2018).

Storage of information: Generating information is one thing, storing it is another and storing it properly is yet another. Information generation will not have any secondary value if it is not stored for future use and if it is not stored in a way that it will not be destroyed (Olubiyo & Olubiyo, 2022; Ameh, 2015). Social work generates information, data that solve current problems and become raw material for future use. If these data are not properly stored, they disappear after their immediate use in a project and poses serious threat not only to the evaluation of the project but the execution of future projects. While social work may generate data, it is not in the business of storing data. Library science is and this is where the nexus between the two on the push for national development comes in (Rwomire, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020).

Facilitating the retrieval of information: Storing information is one thing, retrieving it is another and retrieving it easily is yet another. Library science helps social work intervention for national development by storing development and intervention project information in ways that facilitates retrieval (Igwela & Nsirim, 2017; Malekabadizadeh et al., 2009). In this fast paced society highly influenced by online or virtual interactions, library science can facilitate social work intervention for national development by ensuring that necessary, comprehensive, adequate and latest information on national development are made available on virtual spaces for all to access across geographical boundaries. Besides facilitating information retrieval, this enhances the gaining of information on the development challenges and realities of communities in faraway lands. Information of this nature help development catalysts like social workers not only in appraising the development challenges at hand, but in the creation, execution and evaluation of development projects that are of immediate concern to the nation they work in and for (Omehia, 2019; Zhang, 2017).

Facilitating the creation of certain kinds of information/knowledge: A not so pronounced responsibility of library science is the facilitation of the creation of certain kinds of information; in the discharge of their duty of keeping information and managing knowledge, library scientists are easily in the know of what nature of information is scare and which area is there an abundance of information (Ekong & Ekong, 2018). To boast information scarce information, stakeholders in library science can empower, by way of sponsorship, scholarship in that area or merely by informing the right party of the need to have or generate more information on a specific topic or area where information is scarce (Alamu, 2022; Saka et al., 2018; Obizue & Obizue, 2016) As apply to social work intervention for development, library stakeholders can liaise with development experts to improve the availability of certain kinds of information on a people's culture, on social intervention and on national development.

Conclusion

Library science education can do so much for social work interventions geared at securing national development. As a discipline that is charged with the responsibility of information and knowledge management, library science can enhance social work intervention for national development by providing social workers with the needed information on intervention programmes with development bearings; expedite the creation of certain kinds of information with bearing on development and intervention programmes; store national development information and facilitate the retrieval of development related information. In doing these, library science education facilitates social work intervention for national development by aiding social work in research, creation and execution of development programmes as well as in the generation of data for national development efforts touching on the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of the nation.

Recommendations

Arising from the discussion and conclusion above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Cross professional conferences or submits on national development between the two professions should be organized frequently by relevant stakeholders. This will go a long way in strengthening their bond and commitment towards the common goal of national development.

2. Just like there are sections in the library dedicated to other courses, a section dedicated to social work should be created in the library. This will not only further establish social work as a distinctive course/profession, it will make accessing information and knowledge on social work a lot easy.

3. Relevant stakeholders should sponsor empirical enquiries and authorship on social work intervention and national development. This will create more knowledge while enhancing existing ones.

4. Stakeholders should pay prime attention to information/record keeping on social work intervention programmes that border on development. This will enhance project evaluation, build literature, encourage research and give libraries what to serve its public.

5. Every longitudinal social work intervention exercise should have a record keeper, preferably a library scientist or a communication artist, but certainly a scholar versed with empirical knowhow.

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