

The Responsibilities of School Libraries in Sustaining Information Literacy

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ABSTRACT The Information Literacy curriculum plays the most important role in nurturing information literacy skills among the community as a whole and specifically the students. There is a need that the library intervene with the help of its wide range of resources as well as the librarian to develop these skills in students. This paper aims to analyse the responsibilities of school libraries in sustaining information literacy. The paper provides an overview of the responsibilities of school libraries in sustaining information literacy. In addition, the paper examines the importance of libraries in developing information literacy skills. This is a conceptual paper in which a logical literature review will be employed to examine the responsibilities of school libraries in sustaining information literacy. Consequently, the researcher made some recommendations based on literature reviewed and the experience of various stakeholders; namely that in disseminating information literacy, library and information professionals must participate in continuous encouragement and providing the services close to people's homes to help those who cannot easily access the library. Furthermore, information literacy skills should be incorporated into the schools' curriculum to emphasize the significance and ultimate relevance of the programme.

INTRODUCTION

Hicks and Lloyd (2016) opined that a society that is able to access, evaluate, use and communicate information in an effective and efficient manner is called an information literate society. When we impart our children with the necessary information literacy skills, consequently, the school library can be an influential armament for developing literacy. The library collection of books as well as other resources and the provision of a fascinating and inspiring environment and the schools' attitude towards the usage of the library are significant in motivating and enhancing the learners' capability to read for their schoolwork as well as for recreational purposes. The library collection contributes in developing literacy in learners. The reading resources in the library collection should supplement and sustain the school curriculum as well as the students' interests (Anyaoku 2016; Hicks and Lloyd 2016).

What Information Literacy Entails

Information literacy is regarded as both an appropriate and a fundamental life skill (UNESCO

2008). Literacy can be successfully developed by means of the interesting learning surroundings and the school library materials, via a challenging investigation procedure which involves the learner in the vigorous creation of information (Kuhlthau et al. 2007; Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2010).

According to Dorlvo (2016) Information literacy skills are useful to the society as a whole but particularly to students, so that they will be able to achieve educationally as well as and in their forthcoming occupation prospects. For educators and academics to carry out their professional duties competently and productively it seriously requires information literacy skills. Fundamentally, each and everybody in the general public needs information literacy skills. The society's excellence of life generally and educationally is improved by Information literate persons. Information literacy plays an important role in our everyday life like for example purchasing a residence, selecting a university, making a savings, and countless other things. Information literacy skills are also needed by all to help them to achieve their academic goals. Information literacy is really the basis of the independent society (ACRL 2006; Information Literacy Project 2014).

School Libraries as a Powerful Weapon for Developing Information Literacy

The educational mission of the school library and its carving border responsibility in informa-

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tion literacy education becomes more obvious in some national projects like for example in Norway (Barrett 2007).

Knowledge is power as the saying goes, this is very true because it is what we know that determines what we can do or cannot do. What we know determines whether we succeed or fail. The knowledge we possess can make or mar our destinies. This is why we make deliberate efforts to learn and know whatever there is to know. We learn and become knowledgeable only if we possess the necessary information literacy skills that enable us to acquire information when there is a need for it, search, locate and gather quality information. Information literacy skills are necessary for our daily living, a successful career life, as well as a successful educational pursuit. With information literacy skills, acquiring information on any issue of life becomes stress-free. There is no subject under the sun that cannot be learnt once an individual possess these skills.

Knowledge consequently turns into power when one is able to attain information and excellently employ it to meet one's needs. According to Rockman (2003) information literacy is now regarded as more than just a library question. Information literacy is now considered the crucial concern world-wide for the twenty-first century. It is of paramount importance to all investors in the education sector, embracing administrators, faculties, librarians, media and information technologists. Regardless of the stress on the significance of information literacy instruction, the massive majority of the stakeholders appears conveyed only once by a librarian and incorporated into a prevailing subject-related course (Fister and Eland 2008). A single session is not enough to cover information literacy comprehensively, as a result it can be assumed that much of casual learning takes place owing to coming into contact with information difficulties in practice. Research has revealed that students typically fasten to information-seeking approaches previously recognized to them as an alternative of conducting wide-ranging literature (Grassian and Kaplowitz 2009; Mery et al. 2012).

Fitzsimmons (2006) stated that through the school libraries, librarians collaborate with class teachers to enrich curriculum content, they help create more authentic learning experience. Secondly the school library's collections inform, educate, entertain and enrich students at all lev-

els. Students learn to use and explore information in a meaningful way and their literacy skills grow rapidly. Through libraries, learners become information literate because they learn how to search for information in the library and in the books, and also learn how to learn.

Importance of Information Literacy Skills

UNESCO (2004) stated that the school libraries in Uganda are made available in places where they are fighting illiteracy where the adult literacy rate ranges up to 70 percent while for the young adults it is nearly 80 percent. According to IFLA (2003) out of a population of about 27 million on the continent of Africa, only about 5.5 million are registered library users. Moreover, there is a lack of reading materials while on the other hand the public libraries found in the Sub-Saharan region are based on a western model with out-dated and irrelevant collections in English. Most of the collections are in print while materials in mother tongue are scarce which makes it hard for information literacy development among people.

The Importance of Library in Developing Information Literacy Skills

Nxumalo (1993) and Mudave (2016) stated that for voluntary reading to take place in learners there should be appropriate reading materials readily available for learners to use. As far as the resources are concerned, they have to be available in different formats, to accommodate diversity in development levels and abilities, cultural and language heritage. Most learners in South Africa do not read for pleasure because of lack of appropriate reading materials. Moreover, materials on indigenous languages in which they can read fluently are very few. Reading material in English which is a foreign language to them may be available, but they lack exposure and adequate knowledge of English to be able to read for pleasure which is a good motivation in developing information literacy. This results in other role players in the learners' literacy environment being under pressure.

Apart from the misunderstanding concerning different descriptions of information literacy, there is an understanding surrounded by the literature that public libraries plays a significant role in developing the information literacy lev-

els in their communities. De Groot and Branch (2009) contended that public libraries are extremely functional supporters of infancy literacy and remarked that public libraries encounter added stresses as school libraries were provided insufficient funding or sometimes have to deal with exclusion of funding. Currently there has been improved consciousness of public libraries as significant community places (Julien and Hoffman 2008). On the other hand, Julien and Hoffman stressed that funding has been mainly channelled at purchasing computer hardware or networks, and not at information literacy instruction.

A study conducted by Dent (2006) investigated the relationship between the library and the students' academic indicators such as academic performance, reading habit, study habit and library use patterns. Two schools in Uganda were used to study the above mentioned link. The study found that the school library has an impact in all the indicators set up to be studied. Moreover, Dent (2006) suggested that further research on rural libraries on student performance need to be conducted. He also indicated that a number of studies on the topic have been done in the West, while no important studies have been done in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Dent and Yannotta (2005) stated that the library plays an important role in information literacy instruction, provision of relevant collection as well as supporting the reading culture. Parry (2004) is of the opinion that inadequacy of reading materials leads to relapse back to illiteracy. Moreover, the library supports both the teaching and learning programmes. The library stock of books and other resources as well as the provision of an attractive and stimulating the surrounding and the schools' approach to the library use are important factors influencing the learners' ability to read for their studies as well as reading for pleasure. Library stock contributes in developing literacy in learners. In that regard, the reading material in the library stock should also be well selected to support the curriculum and pupils' interests (Parry 2004).

Special events to raise the profile of literacy and reading can be organized in the library or throughout the school such as exhibitions, author visits, and international literacy days. These special events can provide an opportunity for the parental involvement in the school. Parents may also participate in their children's literacy

development through home reading programs and through read-aloud programs (IFLA 2015: 40).

Arko-Cobbah (2004) indicated that due to the transformations in the South African education system from Bantu education to Outcomes Based education, education has shifted to being student-centred and as a result libraries play a crucial role in this type of learning. Subject teachers are more concerned with the teaching the subject matter while on the other hand the school librarian is accountable for training the learners to become information literate, which in turn will enable them search and retrieve information in the library as well as in the information sources. There are some barriers facing the librarians concerning the students who were learning in schools where there are no libraries because they don't have any background knowledge about how the libraries operate. Arko-Cobbah (2004) maintained that at tertiary level various kinds of students are registered to learn there, these students are from various settings and they do diverse qualifications of which becomes difficult for the librarians to perform her library duties effectively. Consequently, the librarian has the responsibility to facilitate and address following information literacy challenges, namely: "lifelong learning, learning to learn, the need to accommodate different learning styles, customization as well as alternative learning routes of the students." The librarians have a duty to pay more attention to those student from the underprivileged areas in order to assist them to acquire information literacy so that they will be able to succeed with the student-centred learning method.

Smalley (2004) opined that the background of the tertiary students who attended school with well-equipped school library are likely to perform better than those students who attended school where there are no well-equipped libraries. Moreover both the library curriculum as well as the qualified teacher librarian is of utmost importance in promoting information literacy in students. Academic librarians should take into consideration the fact that students from advantaged schools are more information literate than those students from previously disadvantaged schools. According to Smalley (2004) research undertaken throughout the previous era revealed that "schools with school library programs, a professional librarian, where librari-

ans work in collaboration with teachers or faculty, there is sufficient staff, adequate collections have an impact on students' academic achievement."

Todd (2003) argued that there needs to be cooperation between the teacher librarians, teachers as well as administrators so as to help the learners to move from the old method of using the library for accessing information to using the library for becoming information literate. On the other hand, Barton (2006) was of the opinion that teacher librarians should make it a point to align the library program with the school curriculum to ensure improvement in as far as the student academic performance is concerned. Moreover, Krashen (1995) stated that school libraries encourage learners to read more as a result of free access to reading materials. Georges (2004) on the other hand, was of the opinion that the beginning of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) helped the public schools to concentrate on reading and maths teaching, of which the public schools were urged to perform and classroom instruction to be based on the state as well as national standards which in turn develop information literacy in students.

Zorana (2003) stressed that the American Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published standards concerning information literacy, capabilities and the accomplishment indicators. The American Association of School Libraries (AASL) document is established on the Association of Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) standard in order to strengthen the impression of information literacy in learning. Additionally, Carr and Rockman (2003) and Mahwasane (2016) revealed that academic librarians were forced to operate in cooperation with their co-workers in order to facilitate students to develop into information literate and to accomplish improved results in advanced education. The secondary school libraries have the responsibility of preparing the student on how to successfully utilise the school libraries to their own advantage. The students are said to be information literate when they are able to locate and evaluate information and resources when they will be envisaged to utilise the library productively at tertiary level.

Ajebomogun (2010) indicated that education plays an important role in developing the values and attitudes needed to develop the nation. For a nation to be successful in education, it should be information literate and there needs

to be adequate collection of materials and be well staffed. Moreover, the libraries are good at instilling the love for reading, developing information literacy, supporting research and sharpening critical-thinking skills needed for studying. On the other hand, Adefarati (2002) and IFLA (2016) highlighted the objectives of the school library as developing the reading skills as well as developing information literacy, to instil the love for reading so as to develop a culture of reading, to supplement and support the school curriculum as well as to develop intellectual ability. Ajebomogun (2010) stated that according to the National Policy of Education in Nigeria (1981) section 3 nos. 5 and 10, libraries are regarded as the most important educational services that help to sustain information literacy in the nation, and as a result all state ministries of education should contribute funds to help in developing the school libraries as well as training teacher librarians and the library assistance.

According to Swee and Abdullah (2005), Information Literacy Project (2016) schools are considering the use of computerized school library services such as for example circulation of books, cataloguing, internet facilities etc. Fatimah (2002) pointed out that in Malaysia all school libraries or school resource centres (SRCs) are the responsibility of the educational provision. Nearly all primary and secondary schools have a functional school library or school resource centre which is good for the development of information literacy, while the Educational Technology Division (ETD) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) are mandated to see to it that the school libraries are being developed. Moreover in 1999 the Smart School pilot project involving 97 schools started, which hastened the process of Malaysian school libraries' implementation of the library computerized system. The concept Smart Schools is believed to mean that learners should be educated to be "self-paced, self-access and self-directed learner." Kasbon (2001) indicated that there is an increase in the use of IT as a result of the above mentioned project. Chan (2002) agreed with Kasbon's (2001) view and reported about information literacy development in the Smart Schools. According to Zainab and Abdullah (2002) and Abdullah et al. (2002), there was an indication in recent papers that there is a possibility of school libraries in Malaysia using the development of library information system. Yong's study was the first and only

investigation undertaken to examine the recent condition of Malaysian Chinese school libraries in both the primary and secondary schools.

A thorough basis in information literacy understanding assists students in grasping the skill of searching, finding and effectively employing information for intentions of the school assignments, project and research articles.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is a conceptual paper and its purpose was explored through a logical literature review by making use of a combination of both the contextual and conceptual review methods. A considerate and informed review of relevant literature helped the researcher to come out with this study.

DISCUSSION

Libraries play the most important role in developing the human being as a whole. For the library to be able to effectively play its role of promoting information literacy in the society it has to be fully fledged, that is it has to be well equipped with library stock (Anyaku 2016). This is also commended by Fitzsimmons (2007), who contended that through the school libraries, librarians collaborate with class teachers to enrich curriculum content, adding that they help create more authentic learning experience. Secondly, the school library's collections inform, educate, entertain and enrich students at all levels.

Hichs and Lloyd (2016) and IFLA (2016) revealed that the society in which people are information literate is an independent society in which people have values and they are well behaved, they are able search for and retrieve information, to access, use, evaluate, analyse and communicate information in an effective and efficient manner. Information literacy is a set of skills, attitudes and knowledge essential to be able to know and distinguish when information is entailed for resolving an obstruction, make resolutions, and communicate the required information in searchable terminologies and communication. As a consequence, an information literate society will be able to search knowledgeably for the information, retrieve it, translate and comprehend it, systematize it, appraise its trustworthiness and genuineness, evaluate its sig-

nificance, share it with others if essential, and in that case employ it to achieve bottom-line intentions. Moreover, illiterate parents cannot help their children in their education. Illiteracy in the society results in the development of low intellectual culture as well as low spirit of enquiry. These also correlate with literature that indicates that information literacy is predominantly entrenched in the notion of library user educated bibliographic instruction. It is the ability to distinguish when information is required, the capability to discover, evaluate and use successfully required information (Dorvlo 2016; Nkiko 2005).

Information literacy is the basis of lifelong learning, and an information literate person is one who recognizes that accurate and complete information is the basis for intellect (Nkiko 2005; Mudave 2016). It is not surprising that all the communities, institutions companies, just to mention a few that are successful are those whose people are information literate. Each and everybody needs to be information literate because it seems that success, for an individual as well as for an organisation comes from attaining necessary information and enhancing its efficiency. Moreover, Mudave (2016) and Nkiko (2005) added that nowadays the place of work requires abilities for a well-informed and constructive utility of information. Most importantly, information literacy competences encourage the particular scholars to successfully accomplish and utilise information and as a result turn out to be competent students.

It is of paramount importance that the school surrounding be conducive to learning for learners. The school should provide learners with a safe learning environment, the functional library with a wide range of resources as well as the professional librarian who collaborates with teachers in helping to encourage developing information literacy in learners. This correlates with available literature that indicate that information literacy can be successfully developed by means of the interesting learning surroundings and the school library materials, via a challenging investigation procedure which involves the learner in the vigorous creation of information (Amunga 2016; Kuhlthau et al. 2007). Furthermore, Gerard Kennedy the former minister of education in Ontario in Canada announced a 17 million grant to develop the school libraries so as to ensure quality academic performance of the learners. Moreover, the libraries are good at

instilling the love for reading, developing information literacy, supporting research and sharpening critical-thinking skills needed for studying.

CONCLUSION

Information literacy skills are useful to the society as a whole, particularly students, so that they will be able to achieve educationally as well as and in their forthcoming occupation prospects. For educators and academics to carry out their employment tasks competently and productively this seriously requires information literacy skills. We learn and become knowledgeable only if we possess the necessary information literacy skills that enable us to acquire information when there is a need for it, to search, locate and gather quality information. Information literacy skills are necessary for our daily living, a successful career life, as well as a successful educational pursuit. Apart from the misunderstanding concerning different descriptions of information literacy, there is understanding surrounded by the literature that public libraries play a significant role in developing the information literacy levels in their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that school library policy should be thoroughly developed, adopted and implemented to develop student's information skills in private and public schools. For primary and secondary school students the library education and library instruction should be enforced as a means to develop information literacy in them. For university students, arrangements should be made of various kinds of activities like for example trainings, teaching a course, teaching through eLearning platform, and instruction by integrating information literacy in different courses.

Information literacy skills should be integrated into the secondary and tertiary schools' curriculum to underscore the seriousness and utmost relevance of the programme. The application should exceed a simple imaginary distribution to a vigorous realistic hands-on.

There is need for an improved and uninterrupted library user education geared towards authorising students to be adequately habitual with different information sources, format and peculiar characteristics. Teamwork is necessary

between educators and librarians to make ensure the incorporated partaking approach of lecture distribution which requires students to transform to investigated projects as well as embrace tutorial addresses on some course outlines. As a result of involving students to embark on investigating and educating elements of the themes it spontaneously offers an investigative podium for promoting indispensable information literacy skills.

Library and information professionals should participate in persistent encouragement and sensitization outreaches to promoting information literacy. This will influence the public to be aware that lifelong learning is very important to leveraging with universal transformation and improvement.

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