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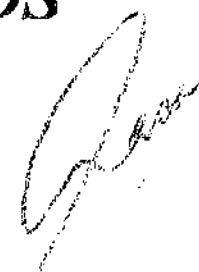
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# INFORMATION TRENDS

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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AS AN IMPETUS FOR  
ACHIEVING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S 7 - POINT AGENDER: THE INFORMATION  
PERSPECTIVE

BY

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ABSTRACT

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Umar Musa Yar'adua in his 7-point agenda proposed a two fold reform for education; ensuring the minimum acceptable international standards of education for all and ensuring excellence in both tutoring and learning skills in science and technology by students who will be seen as the future innovators and industrialists of Nigeria. Information systems are one of the tools of achieving this feat and since the library is an example of information systems that have a track record of enhancing and influencing positively the performance and achievement of students of all institutions, it is capable of providing current and timely information as an aspect of education.

INTRODUCTION

The biggest asset of any organization today, is their information represented in people, experience, know-how innovation (patents, copyrights, trade secrets). And for a market operator to be able to compete, he/she must have a strong information infrastructure, at the heart of which, lies the information technology infrastructure. Thus, the study of information systems focuses on why and how technology can be put into best use to serve the information flow within an organization.

Every individual or institution depends on information to make decisions and the quality of decisions is dependent on the quality of information. As a result of this, institutions invest both money and human resources to develop information systems that will provide them with timely and accurate information for decision making. The means of information production, organization, and dissemination have undergone a major transformation in recent years, with computer based information systems emerging as a dominating force. Information system has been defined as a system of agents and/or methods for collecting, maintaining, manipulation and disseminating data.

Information system is used by institutions to accomplish a specified organizational objective by gathering, processing, storing and/or disseminating information. The main function of any information system is to acquire/collect store, manipulate and disseminate information, for the purpose of record maintenance, oversight, decision-making, strategic and tactical planning, organizations now operate in dynamic environments, management of institutions have to respond quickly to the demands on the organisation caused by changes in technological development. Computer are electronic devices that can store, process, and analyze information according to instruction coded into it at tremendous speed, hence its adoption and use in information systems.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become, within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering the basic skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education alongside reading, writing and numeracy.

Information Communication Technology – or technologies (ICT) is an

umbrella term that includes any technology that enables communication and electronic capture, processing and transmission of information. It encompasses: any medium to record information (whether paper, pen, magnetic, disk/tape, optical disks – CD/DVD, flash memory etc); and also technology for broadcasting information – radio, television; any technology for communicating through voice and sound or images – microphone, camera, loudspeaker, telephone to cellular phones. At present, it is apparently culminating to information communication with the help of Personal that can transfer information using satellite systems of intercontinental cables. Indeed, information technology (IT) has become a kind of a hub for communicating information, most often using computers. But, with an expanding fraction of human population getting empowered to share information it may not continue to be so.

#### The Library as an Information System

According to Mohammed (2007) a library can be defined as a collection of written, printed or other graphic materials including films, slides, phonograph records and tapes housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of people for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment. The library is an example of an information system and it has erroneously been conceived as the store house for books, newspapers and magazines. But the present day library can be seen as an Information Centre and an Information System, in that, it acquires/collects information, stores and manipulates information, and disseminates information for its patrons. Academic Libraries are mostly found in academic institutions such as Universities and Polytechnics and they serve both the students and staff of the universities with their information needs. The National Libraries also known as National Information Systems are maintained by the Government to serve the needs of governmental bodies and citizens of the nation as a whole. They collect all published literature emanating from the country; they also establish national bibliographies for all the publications on a country about the country in all formats, subjects, languages etc. some examples of National Information Systems include the British Museum now British Library, National Library of Nigeria, National Archives etc. Libraries no matter the type subscribe to electronic database which are also a rich collection of electronic information that can be used to educate the

populate. With the advent of Virtual Libraries, libraries are now able to have their own Internet Connectivity, Websites and Libraries, libraries are now able to have their own Internet Connectivity, Websites and Library consortia to further enrich their local collections. School Libraries or school information systems are libraries found in primary and secondary schools. School libraries provide pupils with some of their fit experiences in using libraries. They function in identifying and providing adequate and comprehensive teaching and learning resources in different forms which will meet the intellectual and recreational needs of both the teachers and students, they relate their resources and services to the school curriculum. Extra curriculum programmes and anticipated requirements for all teaching units of the school. Studies have shown the effect of school information systems on the achievements and performance of students, studies like Michie et al (2005) was based on the evaluation of improving literacy through school library program. The purpose of the program was to improve the literacy skills and academic achievement of students by providing them with increased access to up-to-date school library materials; well-equipped, technologically advanced school library media centres; and well-trained, professionally certified school library media specialists. Similarly, the study by Lonsdale (2003) was actually a review of researches conducted in Australia on the impact of school libraries on students achievement. The main purpose of this review was to report on the nature and extent of the evidence that has linked school libraries to student achievement since 1990, to identify the strengths and gaps in existing data as it might relate to an Australian setting, and to suggest some strategies for developing further research in Australia.

The National policy on Education in Nigeria has always included the library as one of the most important educational services. However, Nigerian position in the provision of school libraries has mostly ended at policy formulation level. According to Opeleke et al (2006) school libraries both secondary and primary school levels are an eyesore in Nigeria. Studies on school libraries in Nigeria have shown that little or no attention has been paid to school libraries by the various governments at all levels – local, state and federal. Functional school libraries are needed to translate both the national policy on education and the 7-point agenda into realities.



## THE NEW LEARNING ENVIROMENT

Along with changes in the amount and quality of information potentially available to students, and the increasingly sophisticated technological means of accessing this information, the most significant change for school libraries in terms of educational practice has been the shift from a content-based education to an outcome-based education. Whereas a content-based education focuses on what students have been taught, an outcome-based education focuses on what students have learned; that is, on their skills and understandings. An ASLA discussion paper (2001) notes the emergence of curriculum statements in the various States and Territories that emphasize the processes of learning and information literacy, including independent, integrated resources-based and technology-based inquiry learning and collaborative project-based learning. In an influential study, Kuhlthau (1989) points out how the process approach can be confronted because it means that it is no longer acceptable for teachers simply to cover the content of a particular curriculum program or to teach for a particular test; rather they need to restructure their programs so that students are actively involved in using information for learning. Kuhlthau shows a process approach to information use has the potential to empower school librarians as well as offering them a tool for collaborating with teachers.

Loertscher (1999) looks at the growth popularity of constructivism, which encourages students to take control of their own learning. Kuhlthau (1993) talks about the constructivist theory of learning, which builds on what students already known and actively involves them with a range of resources. The changes in approach to teaching and learning required school librarians to adopt a more outcome - focused practice and a focus on information literacy as opposed to a collections - based practice.

## CHANGING ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Harvey (2001) refers to the general trends identified in a 2001 study by Tilley and Callison, in which they note a shift away from audiovisual, library skills, selection of materials, isolated skill sets, resource input, general resources' towards 'multimedia and telecommunications, information literacy and inquiry, learner needs analysis, collaboration and curriculum integration and learner performance

diversification to target unique needs' (Harvey P. 11), Harvey notes that library education is becoming more focused on users and their needs and less focused on the library and its particular practices.

While the school librarian's job today, at a fundamental level, remains the same in that it is still about facilitating access of information, it has also become more complex and demanding. The responses to a small informal survey of teacher librarians in Australia (Todd 2001) reveal the extra challenges associated with developing and maintaining digital collections and services. Respondents indicated that they were now faced with maintaining information technology equipment and servicing the needs of users, and are being forced to assume the various roles of web master, network password administrator, professional development organizer for staff, computer technician with no extra staff or time allowance, and facilitator of technology use for both students and teachers (P.6). Book (2002) also notes an increased expectation that school librarians will supervise students' Internet usage, assist with home page and website development, help teachers with the intranet, provide staff professional development, assist with data retrieval, and be responsible for system back-ups and general maintenance all this on top of their role of co-ordinating information literacy rather than as a replacement thereof. The changes, Book (2001) suggests, have meant a greater demand on the time, skills and energy of school librarians. The post - 1990 research studies that examine the relationship between school libraries and student achievement have thus been conducted against a background of these broader changes in school library demographics profound developments in information and technology a shift to outcomes-based education and an inquiry-based approach to learning, generic skills and lifelong learning, and greater accountability in the form of performance indicators. At the same time, it is worth remembering that, as Prestebak (2001) points out, the three elements of libraries; information education and recreation have changed little since 1918. Although the school library has evolved in response to the kinds of radical changes outlined in this review, these three services are still fundamental to the work of the school librarian.

## CONCLUSION

School libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading

scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that:

- A strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community;
- A strong computer network connecting the library's resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement;
- The quality of the collection has an impact on student learning;
- Test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library;
- Collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers;
- A print-rich environment leads to more reading, is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth spelling and grammatical ability and writing style;
- The extent to which books are borrowed from school libraries shows a strong relationship with reading achievement whereas borrowing from classroom libraries does not;
- Integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students' mastery of both content and information-seeking skills;
- A positive difference can be made to student achievement when school libraries cooperate with public libraries;
- Libraries can make a positive difference to students' self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning;
- A solid academic foundation can be paid to primary school library development.

#### RECOMMENDATION

In actualizing the 7 - point Agenda of the Nigerian governments the following recommendations are proffered:

Rebuild the Nigerian human capital and support the nation's economy through the provision of sound education. Sound education can be facilitated through the provision of a strong and viable school library/media centre.

Lay a solid foundation for our tomorrow's leaders, by inculcating in the children the spirit of commitment by acquiring up - to - date and challenging resources that will tailor them towards self actualization.

- Acquire and use advanced technology, to be incorporated into the curricula of the school, to develop and enhance the information literacy; to assist in information retrieval; and to develop critical thinking skills of students.
- Facilitate Internet links and other resource-sharing networks among schools, school library media centers, and public and academic libraries, where possible;
- Provide professional development for school library media specialists and activities that foster increased collaboration between school library media specialists, teachers, and administrators; and
- Provide students with access to school libraries during non-school hours, including the hours before and after school, during weekends, and during summer vacation periods.

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