THE RELEVANCE OF INFORMATION CHAIN IN SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the relationship between Information Cain and Book and their relevance in sustainable national development. The elements and stakeholders in information chain for national development were identified and discussed.

The dynamics of information chain in Nigeria national development were highlighted. It concludes that the government and the governed need to lend support to information chain to ensure sustained development and advancement in Nigeria.

Introduction

Consequentially, information can simply be referred to as any conscious or unconscious action, inaction, perception, conception and idea that adds to our existing knowledge, skill, and experience positively or otherwise.

The added value of information on our existing knowledge, skill and experiences is relative as it is a function of the prevailing circumstances, area of focus and the expected outcome. Information therefore, provides the best opportunity to take decision and strategies to execute them will be counting and on the type and nature of information available, accessed and utilized. This goes without the saying that the nature, process and extent of a nation's or society's development will largely depend upon the type and nature of information available, accessed and utilized by the stakeholders in national development.

According to Mohammed (2008), the basic objectives of a national development or developmental policies of a nation should aim at rapid modernization and enrichment of its societies, communities and people especially through quality education, health care delivery, information provision, industrialization and promotion of science and technology.

Unlike the 'Book Chain' which centres on the authorship, publishing, printing, booksekking, and librarianship, the 'information chain' involves the generation, acquisition, documentation, dissemination access and utilization of information. Since information chain has all the elements of Book chain, the existence and authorship of information chain is needed for any form or type of national development.

It is generally agreed that it is anti progress for a society of nation to be static developmentally. Elements of dynamism have to be developed and maintained for a society or nation to move forward in all spheres of human endeavour. What is therefore required is to ensure that the dynamism of information chain is vigorously maintained and sustained so as to ensure the provision of the right information to the right stakeholders at the right time and in the right package for sustained development and advancement of the nation, society and socio-economically, politically and culturally. Well informed individuals and groups are needed in all spheres of human endeavours and indeed in all segments of national and societal activities, and programmes to bring about positive changes, development and advancement.

ELEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN INFORMATION CHAINB

(a) Information Generation

Information is being generated daily and always by individuals, communities, institutions and organizations consciously or unconsciously, formally and informally, due to one reason or the other and regardless of the level of literacy, channels of communication and language of communication adopted or prevalent in such

communities, societies and nations. More often than not, the stakeholders of information generation in civilized or uncivilized, developed or underdeveloped and developing nations and societies include: government officials, authors/writers, scholars, researchers, students, administrators, employers of labour and employees, publishers, printers, painters, housewives, exhibitors, teachers, politicians, farmers, etc varies as the nature, type and characteristics of information generations are, so varied the type and nature of information each generates. Information usually generated by the stakeholders cover variety of areas of needs and interests. Also they are produced in different formats such as printed documents, Audio/visuals and electronic documents. Thus, by implication therefore, the type of information generated by a people, community, society and nation will largely affect the type, nature, process development and advancement of such society and nation.

(b) **Information acquisition**

It is a fact that there is no limitation to the location, deposition and depot of information. What is more important is its availability, relevance and usefulness to the intended users. More often than not information generated from within may not suffice the developmental

needs of a progressive society or nation. Hence the need to continually acquire all available relevant information regardless of their origin or source within and outside the given society and nation. The availability and application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has largely facilitated the acquisition of all types of information both in printed and electronic formats. The major stakeholders in information acquisition include the libraries, educational institutions, scholars, students, researchers, Book Agents, Bookshops, Information centres, parents, writers/authors, information service providers in both print and electronic media and policy makers. A careful analysis of the information needs and use of the stakeholders in information acquisition will point to the fact that the level of their exposure to variety of information generated and acquired from within and outside their localities could have a major consequency in their level of participation and contribution to the developmental programmes and strategies for their societies, communities and nations.

(c) **Information Documentation**

the basic objective of information documentation is to ensure its continued availability, security, preservation and access irrespective of its place of generation and the generator. The importance of information and the need to secure, preserve and document them for the use of the existing generations, and those yet unborn has been demonstrated by the various generations of civilizations starting from the Ancient times, when leaves, palms, stones, parchments etc were used to record information to the modern civilization where information are recorded in manuscripts, printed, audio-visual and electronic formats without limitation to their origin/source and perhaps the location of the user and depot as well as the time of usage.

The major stakeholders in information documentation include the publishers and printers, the authors/writers, the librarians and documentalists, and other generators of information irrespective of language of communication, and alphabet of writing, and format of document and content. Developmental process, programmes and strategies as well as decision making processes and strategies at every level and stage require re-assessment and review of programmes made and for plotting the next line of action. Hence the need for information

documentation by all the stakeholders in development processes, and strategies, programmes and decisions.

(d) **Information Access**

The relevance and usefulness of any type of information is contingent upon the level of its access for use. Information needs to be by the stakeholders to get them fully informed so that they can take informed decisions and contribute more effectively and efficiently in national development and advancement. Information, whether documented or conventionally or not, is better accessed with the aid of a custodian facilitator and/or access media such as catalogue, indexes, abstracts, etc regardless of the format.

The access media to information not only facilitate easy access to the definition within the lots, but serve as veritable avenue for reating awareness of their existence and location and the provision of bibliographic information abaout them for easy identification. The availability of cataloging rules such as the AACR2, NARC21, Computer application softwares and hardware, provision of on-line databases and services and indeed the Internet and other ICTs have facilitated easy access to information irrespective of their location, source, format and access time in

information access include the librarians, Archivists, documentalists, information service providers, software engineers/programmers, database developers and administrators, systems administrators, publishers, printers, and compilers. The development and application of information access media requires technical know-how and skills. Hence, the need for availability of professionalists to handle the tasks. This is necessary to reduce drastically the time of access and identification of the documents/information by the target customers/users. The easier it is to access a needed information/document, the more the likelihood of its effective utilization and consequently the more informed the stakeholders in taken vital decisions for the overall development and advancement of the society and nation.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION/MARKETING

It is generally agreed that for every information generated and perhaps documented has its target user. In effect therefore, an information is said to be relevant and useful only to the extent that the target audience is aware of its existence and location for easy access and use. Hence the need for marketing of information regardless of the style of packaging.

In the contemporary scene, business marketing strategies are employed in the dissemination of information. They include the user of

avenues such as book talk, story hours, exhibitions, bookfairs, advertisement in print and electronic media, book launch, displays at functions and in strategies places such as in libraries, information centres, book kiosks, transport stations, bookshops, etc.

The major stakeholders in information dissemination include the book sellers such as the Book Vendors, Book Agents, Book Retailers, the librarians, organizers of book fairs and exhibitions, publishers, printers, print and electronic media agents and other categories of information service providers.

The success or otherwise of information marketing for national development will largely depend upon the channel adopted, the style and format of packaging and category of the target customer. What is therefore required is the ability to link the right user with the right information at the right time to ensure effective access and utilization.

INFORMATION USE AND UTILISATION

Stakeholders in national or societal development require the use of all relevant information regardless of the language of communication, alphabet of writing, and format of presentation. However, the content of information and the target customer could have direct bearing on the extent of its use and

utilization. By implication therefore, the choice or selection of information to be generated and/or acquired for use for developmental purposes and indeed for other purposes should be guided by the content, the intellectual or literary capacity of the target audience, the level of treatment of the subject matter, the purpose of acquisition, language of documentation, and convenience of access and use.

Depending upon the nature, type and format/presentation of information, some information are better utilized when they are packaged for 'read only', 'view only', 'touch only', 'feel only', 'hear only', 'perceive only', or a combination of any two or more of the options. This implies that the choice of any type of information needed for effective ustilisation should be guided by its relevance of the content, literary level of the users, format of presentation, level of treatment of the subject matter, convenience of access and use and language of communication. What is therefore required to ensure proper utilization of information of any sort and for any purpose is the putting in place the relevant structures and other enabling environment that will provide convenience in the access and use of such information.

All and sundry in a society, community and nation are severally and collectively stakeholders in information utilization for national development. However, the level and extent of usage will be contingent upon the area of

interest and coverage, the purpose of use, the extent of availability and location, the type of need and the capacity of the user to fully utilize the information optimally. It is thus important that needs analysis of the stakeholders are made before the generation, acquisition, documentation and provision of information is made for any purpose at all.

THE DYNAMICS OF INFORMATION CHAIN IN NIGERIA

Like any other developed or developing nation, information provision for sustainable development and advancement of Nigeria is made possible especially through the establishment of variety of administrative structures and policies aimed at facilitating easy access to information.

Some of the establishments responsible for information development, book policies, book development, importation and exportation of books and other educational materials, literary promotion, legal depository, publishing and printing, etc include:

- Federal and State Ministries of Education, Culture and Tourism, Information and National Orientation, Commerce and Industry, Finance and national Planning.
- Government Agencies and Parastatals such as Nigerian Customs Services, National Educational Research and

Development Council 9NERDC), Universal basic Education Commission, Agency for Mass Literacy, Commission for Monadic Education, Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), etc.

- Proessional Associations such as the Associaiton of Nigeria Authors, Association of West Africa Young Writers, Women Writers of Nigeria, Nigeria Guild of Editors, Nigeria Library Associations, etc.
- Publishrs' Association such as the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA), Scholarly Publishers Association of Nigeria, Association of African Book Editors, etc.
- Booksellers' Associations such as the Nigerian Booksellers Association.
- Printers' Associations such as the Association of Nigerian Printers.
- Book Publishers such as the Textbook Publishers, Academic/Research Publishers and General/Trade Publishers.
- Booksellers and Distributors such as Chain Booksellers, Retail Bookshops, Book wholesalers and Importers,
- The Libraries and Information Centres such as the National and Public Libraries, Academic Libraries, School Libraries,

Ministry Libraries, Institutions/organization libraries and privation libraries.

- Media Agencies such as the Print and Electronic Media houses owned by governments and private individuals.
- Government and Private educational institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.
- Non-Governmental Oorganisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) engaged in socio-economic political and cultural empowerment of the people such as the Nigeria Book Foundation.

There is no doubt in the fact that the aforementioned agencies and institutions are engaged in actively and in some cases perceivably in he wheel of information chain needed for the overall development of the Nigeria nation and people through generation, acquisition, documentation, access, dissemination and utilization of relevant and strategic developmental information. However, the extent to which they are severally and collectively contributing to the dynamics of information chain for strategic changes in national development has been affected by such predispositions such as:

- Contradictions in policy formulation and implementation.
- Level and types of literacy of the citizenry.
- Over concentration of Nigeria publishers in piracy and secondary texts as against gertirary texts within most of the foreign publishers and printers engage in less attention given to indigenous publications especially in local languages.
- Unfavourable landscape of operation for the publishers, printers and authors/writers.
- Cut throat competition between the foreign and indigenous publishers and printers.
- The application of ICTs to publishing and printing especially with regards to quality product, cost of systems maintenance, availability of manpower and other factors of production.
- Variations in the curriculum of education and training assured as certification by government and privation educational and training institutions.
- Language of communication and alphabet of writing.

- Inadequacy of financial resources coupled with the economic meltdown across the globe and continued degradation of the value of Nigeria currency (Naira).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is symbiotic relationship between information chain and book chain in national development. The stakeholders and elements of information chain needed for sustained national development and advancement at all levels require some form of financial, legal, administrative and material support to succeed in contributing their quota.

What is therefore required for the effective and efficient contribution of information chain to sustained national development and advancement is the willingness and readiness of the government and the government to lend their support for the sustenance and advancement of the information chain.

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