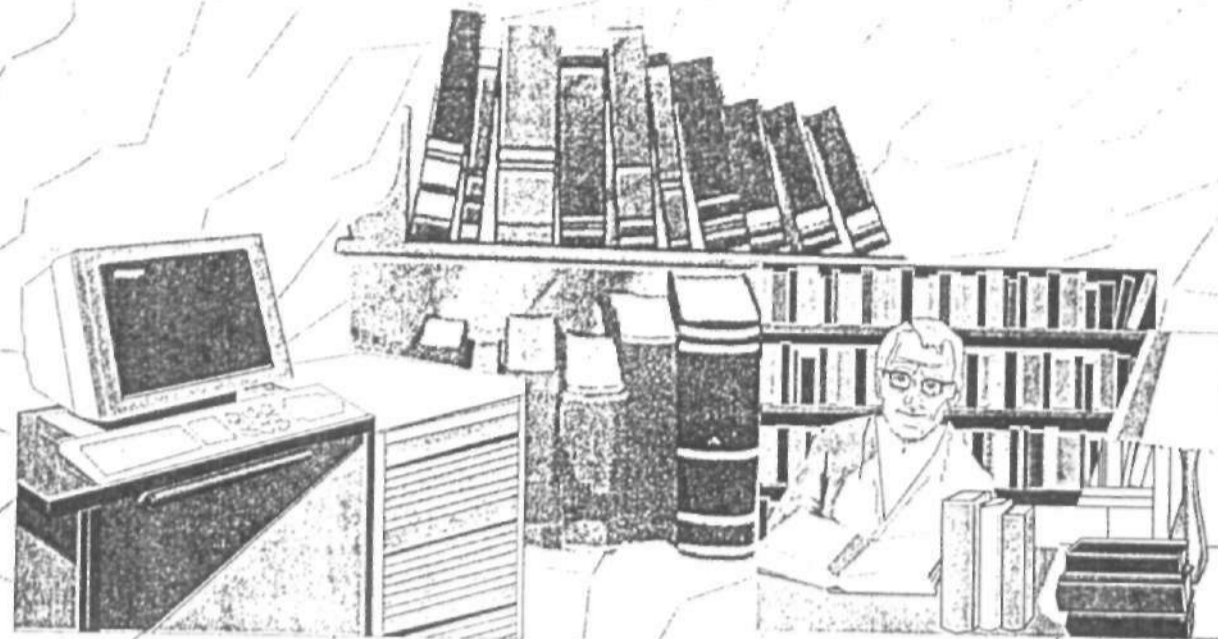


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Abstract

THE paper traces the development of Professions vis-a-vis Professional bodies and associations. The process of Individual development within the Professions is discussed. Highlighting the role libraries and Information centers have been playing towards effective Professional Development, the paper pins down some very significant Information services that Librarians/Information specialists need to provide for sustainable Professional Development. Because of the vast opportunities offered by ICTs, the paper concludes by re-echoing the calls made by many Library and Information Scientists for the urgent need for Libraries and Information centers to acquire, utilize and harness the Information resources and services available globally through the ICTs for professional development.

Key Words: Libraries, Information provision. Professional development, Development Information, Career Development, Continuing Professional Education

Introduction

Development is a concept that has variously been defined by different scholars depending on the framework within which the concept operates. Thus, we have, Economic Development, Social Development, Industrial Development, Technological Development, National Development and Professional Development just to mention a few. National Development as defined by such scholars as Aboyade (1984) Brooks (1990), Sachs (1992), Mohammed (1996) etc, involves economic growth, modernization, equitable distribution of income and national resources and socio economic transformation for improved living standards of people through the use of a country's human, natural and institutional resources. These definitions have clearly indicated that not only resources are considered as objects of development but also people and societies.

Convincingly, the greatest resource for any kind of development is people. Insaideo (2001:1) aptly observes that human factor in the development of any organic society or institution is a very important element that ought to be addressed seriously to ensure optimum use and expression of individual talents and capabilities. It is a fact that a society, institution, or a nation could be endowed with logistics, natural resources and other factors that lend support to life and development in the broader sense. However, without adequate human resource and a development capacity building scheme that is geared towards the ultimate goal of the society, or nation, it could be extremely difficult for such a society or nation to fully explore its resources and exploit them for socio-economic, cultural and political development.

There is no doubt about the fact that development is a product of education. Education is a process through which people are formally and informally trained to acquire knowledge and skills. The formal training comes from established schools from the basic level to the tertiary level. Through this process of education people are expected to specialize in specific fields of study. It is this specialization that allows people to contribute meaningfully to national development. Following this, therefore, there exist today in our society distinct groups of people bound together by common education background, specialized training and shared interest working assiduously in various sections of the society for specific and overall national development. It is these distinct groups of area of specialization, which bring together people that are referred to as called professions

2.0 Professions/Professional Organizations

According to Encarta Encyclopedia (2003) a profession could simply be defined as occupation requiring extensive education or specialized training. The professions stand out as distinct groups whose members share common socio-economic origins, educational experiences and life styles. It is a

characteristic of the professions to be distinctive among themselves by subject, tradition, service and status. Lawal (2002:1) observes that the degree of learning required differs from profession to profession; equally, the status concerns of the membership and the profession itself differ in magnitude from society's view point.

Further more, the literature of the sociology of the professions includes many attempts to list the distinctive features of a profession. A review of the various attempts to delineate the characteristics of a profession as presented by Ward (1980:24) includes:

- An organized body of systematic and theoretical knowledge
- Primary orientation to the community interest rather than to individual self interest
- Autonomy
- Group control of practice through licensure and codes of ethics
- Professional organization
- Constant communication between the profession and the community concerning the needs of the community, the ways in which the profession can meet these needs and the effectiveness of professional activities that is in operation.
- Specialization

Francis Bacon believed that categorization of people into different occupations began at the beginning of the modern scientific era of the 17th century. And by the beginning of the 19th century professions such as Education, Accountancy, Engineering, Banking, Medicine, Insurance brokers, Architecture, etc have already been fully formed and well rooted in the society. The role of these professions in national development cannot be over emphasised. The professionals apply their skills in transforming the socio-economic objectives of governments into reality, and bringing national programmes or development plans for economic growth to fruition.

The concern to provide a framework for the development of individual in a profession and the need to influence the creation of the social framework within which the profession as a whole can develop necessitate the need for professionals within professions to come together under a well structured organization or association. Professional associations or organizations provide platform for the interchange/exchange of ideas, self-control and benefit both for the membership and the practice of the profession as a whole. Two fundamental issues of importance in the conception of professional associations/organization as pointed out by Lawal (2002:1) are the requirements for organizations to be "formal" and "effective". "Formal" in the sense that it has adequate (e.g. full time) secretarial representation for coordinating the association's activities (such as in public policy matters) and, in general, executing the functions of the organization which are diverse but nevertheless essential for setting standards of conduct, influencing, professional behaviours, disciplining poor performance, and maintaining a register of membership. 'Effective', from the view point of being guaranteed recognition through government legislation or other constitutional instrument which will enhance the development of the profession; having active membership on its roll and encouraging its members to participate in the activities of the organization at national and local levels.

The Conant Report (1980) provides a summary of what professional associations/organization are mandated to do. They should:

- Determine who enters the profession and what qualifications and educational standard they must meet to qualify for professional practice
- Provide formal instruction for those who seek to qualify for professional practice
- Supply the profession with qualified people,
- Provide continuing education,
- Define the objectives of the profession, and
- Anticipate its future needs.

Similarly, Lawal (2002:80) aver that the rationale of a professional organization for people working within any field of activity derives from certain basic needs:

- To develop and up date their basic knowledge
- To have some ways of checking whether they are keeping in touch with important developments
- To be able to establish credentials of capability accepted by fellow workers, employers and others with whom professional contact is made
- To gain recognition from fellow professionals and from current and potential employers and others of their status in the field.

The formation of professions and professional bodies/associations in Nigeria could be traced to the Colonial era. Just like in their home Country, the first generation of professions and professional bodies/associations formed in the country revolved around the main economic sector-Accountancy, Banking, Insurance and Land survey. The formation of professions and professional bodies/associations in Nigerian was initially on regional basis. Thus our cherished profession, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) started as West African Library Association (WALA), so did many other professions.

However, by late 1960s and early 1970s all the associations had become fully Nigerianised. To list the number of professional bodies/associations in Nigerian is beyond the scope of this paper, however, the following have to be mentioned as examples: Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), Council of Registered Engineers in Nigeria (COREN), e.t.c

It is interesting to note that in Nigeria today many professional bodies/associations are fully developed with permanent secretariats, well-structured programmes and schools for the acquisition of new and specialized skills. In acknowledging the development of professional bodies/associations in Nigeria, Akinmutimi (1999:39) heartily welcomed the formation of Association of Professional Bodies in Nigeria (APBN). The association, as indicated in its mission statement, is the statutory umbrella organization for all professional bodies/associations in the country. From time to time, the association dialogue and advises governments on different professional issues.

3.0 Professional Development

Professional Development could be referred to as the process of change that enable people to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potentials through building in themselves confidence, knowledge, experiences and skills necessary for them to belong to a particular occupation and to be able to practice effectively in the occupation. Professionals acquire the prescribed body of knowledge in formal schools. The preparation includes a limited period of internship. Salisu (2002:1) however, regrettably observes that even in developed countries of the world complete professional preparation is not possible in any formal educational setting for any profession. Prospective practitioners must, however, acquire the body of knowledge prescribed by the regulating bodies for the practice of these professions. They also undergo prescribed internship for a specified period of time to prepare them for the challenges of professional practice.

To ensure sustainable professional development, many professions operate their own education and training schemes and further influence tertiary institutions in the academic and professional preparation of their practitioners. In this line, many professional associations/organizations have designed certain qualifying courses for their members to undergo as a way of developing within the profession. The architects and engineers validate courses run at universities, while the Nigerian Institute of

Management (NIM) initiates its own syllabus based on the Nigerian business, economic and industrial experience but places great reliance in theory on esoteric principles generated from industrialized nations.

Apart from this, many professions also establish separate schools for their members to attend after graduating from the universities. Lawyers hoping to be called to bar have to attend the Law School just in the same way as Nigerian qualified accountants have to enroll with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) or Association of National Accountants (ANA). Likewise, Medical Doctors aspiring to develop within the profession have to attend and pass examinations from many colleges.

It is as a result of these hectic processes that professionals have to undergo in order to be properly re-baked for meaningful national development that made Ward (1980:1) to view professional development in a wider context. In his view professional development is perhaps rather, more concerned with the organic or systematic development of the individual. It involves the development of attitudes and approaches to day-to-day work; the individual's view of his or her career and its possible directions; and the actions that each may take as technological, social, political and economic changes affect daily work. It also involves developing methods of approach to working relationships with clientele, colleagues and employers.

Professions set up a number of professional development activities and programmes. However, almost all these activities and programmes revolve around continuing professional education. Continuing education plays an important part in professional development; guidance on working in changing situations will come from a variety of sources – attendance at conferences, discussion at professional meetings, and by taking further training. Training and retraining, staff exchanges, linkages with similar and related professions e.t.c, are other activities professional undertake to develop themselves.

4.0 The Role of Libraries in Professional Development

The role of information towards individual, organization, and national development cannot be belaboured here. Information, it is said, is the life wire of not only an organization but also a nation. Wali (1992:4) attests to the fact that no sector of any economy can function effectively without access to information. It is indeed becoming a catalyst of every developmental effort – technology, agriculture, social, political, etc.

It is the realization of the enormous power of information that made libraries and information resource centres inevitably present in all the sectors of a nation's economy. Thus, today, libraries are found in all the three levels of our educational system, public, research institutions and private organizations, such as Banks, Insurance Companies, Manufacturing Companies, etc.

The role of libraries in professional development could be traced right from school libraries. The school library not only provides relevant information resources that shapes and moulds an individual for future leadership but also instill in him the cherished life long learning. Also a proper instruction at school prepares the way for the use of larger libraries-public, university, special, and is a guarantee for a life-long education and enrichment. The academic library provides varied and in-depth information resources that enable individuals pursue the specific field of study in which they wish to specialize in. In both schools and tertiary institutions, libraries are known to be indispensable part of the overall curriculum. A variety of information resources such as text books, journals, reference books, literary books, multi media etc are selected, systematically organized and disseminated to both teachers and pupils, and faculty staff and students with the sole aim of supporting and enriching the school curriculum. Public libraries attempt to meet a wide variety of readers' needs. In addition to traditional literature, their collections contain social services information, reference work, and recreational information and extension services.

Special library on the other hand differs from other type of libraries in two major ways. First, they belong to corporations, associations, private enterprises or any other. Secondly they are mainly devoted to a special subject(s) offering specialized services to specialized clientele. Ibrahim (1998:67) notes that the information provided special libraries relate mostly job, which will enable users, execute their assigned job effectively and improve their skills.

The realization of the importance of libraries has made many professional bodies and associations to establish their own libraries and Information centers that would cater for the specific information needs of their members. For instance, the Nigerian Law School has well-established libraries at Lagos, Enugu and Kano branches of the school. Similarly, the Nigerian Institute of management (NIM) has a well-stocked library at its headquarters in Lagos. It is interesting to note that right now automation and networking of the NIM library has been completed and plans are on the way to integrate into the networking the zonal branch offices. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) library at Lagos is also fully automated. It is also common to find libraries and information centers at the secretariat of most professional association. The Chartered Library and Information Professional (CLIP) in Great Britain have at its secretariat one of the biggest, best and most comprehensive professional libraries in the world. No matter what your professional needs are, the library offers wide range of benefits.

From the foregoing, it can vividly be seen that libraries have right from time aligned themselves with development. However, the focus of this paper is to outline and discuss those activities, plans, programmes and services libraries should initiate and implement in order to effectively and efficiently bring about sustainable professional development.

5.0 Library Programmes and Services for Sustainable Professional Development

With rapid transformation in our society as the result of revolution in Information Technology, professionals are discovering that they must return to school in order to keep up with both their professional fields and also with changes in the technologies they use in doing their work. Others in the work force sometimes decide to change jobs at mid-career and must learn new skills. Therefore, it is pertinent for Librarians/Information specialists to develop the ability to provide varied Information services for professional growth and development. In order to carry out these successfully, the following programmes and services are suggested for implementation.

5.1 Community Analysis

Community analysis here refers to the overall process of identifying the mission, objectives and activities of professional bodies. Turfan (2004:3) added the need to know the professional bodies' plans, demographic analysis and focus groups. Therefore, it is very important for the librarian or information specialist to understand the profession, the characteristics, information needs of members in the profession and information seeking behaviour of the professionals. In addition to these, he/she should also acquaint himself/herself with the kind of training, job analyses and descriptions, continuing professional education programmes and other relevant professional programmes.

5.2 Profiling

Closely related to community analysis is profiling. Profiling has to do more with the individual in the profession. The librarian or information specialist should make effort to know members individually and personally. He/she should collect specific details about each member. For instance, the librarian should attempt to find out how ambitious the members are, whether they have any career plans and the skills they have are up-to-date. As pointed out by Pantry and Griffiths (2003) information on specific individuals offers guidance on managing every stage of their career, whether they are new entrants to the profession, wishing to know how to get a foot on the ladder, an information professional in mid-

career wishing to progress, or a candidate for a more senior position needing a view of the current state of the profession.

5.3 Sourcing Information

Sourcing information involves identifying, assessing, evaluating, and acquiring, different information resources from both internal and external environments of the profession. This process is undertaken after determining the information needs of the profession because only those relevant information resources should be acquired. While information for professional development can be sourced from secondary information resources, such as books, journals, etc, professional information should be documented through collecting information from professional societies representing a variety of disciplines, and soliciting information from other educational institutions.

Therefore, the librarian/information specialist should pay particular attention to sourcing information such as notices for training programmes, professional meetings, conferences/ seminar/workshops, forthcoming events, and job advertisements. Apart from the fact that information derived from these sources is most useful for professional development, it is likely that these sources will also provide information on the changing pattern of the profession. For instance in job advertisements, the current job analysis and description, required skills are always spelt out.

5.4 Types of information services for professional development

In order to provide proactive information services from the various information resources sourced by the librarian/information specialist, the provision of the following information services is suggested:

5.4.1 Current Awareness Services (CAS)

Professional members should be well informed on the current happenings in their profession. Demand for new skills, new innovations, practices, potentials of new and old technologies, utilization of current and emerging technologies should be communicated to them immediately. For instance, *Library Hi Tech News* is an information service that keeps professional Librarians fully informed of the latest developments in library automation, new products, network news, new software and hardware, and people in technology. Published monthly and distributed ten times a year, it combines features, conference reports, regular columns, news items and diary of forthcoming events worldwide. *Library Hi Tech News* no doubt represents the perfect way to stay abreast of important issues and activities in the library and information world-especially concerning IT in libraries. In providing Current Awareness Services (CAS), the librarian should try to involve everyone in the profession. He can capitalize on the experiences, creativity and popularity of the members of the professions to achieve this. Current Awareness Services (CAS) such as the following could be provided

Career Information: This relates to information on job opportunities, recruitment agencies, and e.t.c. The librarian should periodically give full details of priority services, job offers, including jobs not formerly advertised, with contract and permanent opportunities

Talk shows: This is a situation in which the librarian should, from time to time, and using different criteria, invite members of the profession to give a talk on certain aspects of the profession e. g their experiences, difficulties and solutions. Closely related to this, is that the librarian should periodically organize lectures on key developments in the profession.

News group: The librarian should try to identify people in the profession that are interested in current affairs with a view to bringing them together as news group. The group can then be used to source current information and happenings in the profession. The group can be encouraged to share this information with the librarian and the rest of the members of the profession.

Exhibition: This is also another avenue through which current developments in a profession can be made known to the professional. New inventions, products, literature, etc can be shown to members during exhibition.

5.4.2 Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)

This type of services is usually targeted towards individual members of the profession. The librarian must have identified at the profiling stage individual information needs, career plans, aspirations and professional development plans. The librarian, after analyzing information from the different information resources sourced should direct relevant information to the right people in the profession through *news alert, mailing and personal contact*. Advice and consultancy can equally be offered on individual basis. Confidential one-to-one advice on jobs, pay, terms and conditions, redundancy, GVs, interviews, equal opportunities, harassment, e.t.c, can be provided. Significantly, the librarian after knowing individual needs should try to bring together those professionals that have one thing or the other in common. This, he can do through the establishment of *discussion, innovation and collaboration groups*.

5.5 Managing Information for Professional Development

It is significant to note that for any information system to be effective and efficient, information must be carefully and properly managed. One aspect of management that is very important in the provision of information for professional development is monitoring and evaluation. It is very important for the librarian to have some means of determining the influence/impact the information he supplies is making; whether it is really enhancing job performance and utilization of newly acquired skills. Feedback would always allow the librarian/information specialist deliver good information services

5.6 The Place of ICT in Professional Development

The development and availability of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has today not only increased and broadened the impact of information on people but has also placed vast information resources at their doorsteps. Their applications in Libraries and Information centers have indeed continued to ease and promote quick and timely access to and transfer of information. The provision of all the information services mentioned above can easily be done with the help of ICTs. Key reading, research register, table of content alerting and other news alerting can be provided through e-mailing. Discussion groups, reference linking, links with professional and electronic resource sharing can equally be done through networking. There is no doubt about the fact that ICTs have indeed made scientists' participation in Invisible colleges more real than before. It has also brought together, experts, professionals, scholars, e.t.c, and resources that are found dispersed round the globe.

6.0 Conclusion

The paper has highlighted the concepts of profession, professional bodies/associations and professional development. It has shown that effective professional development is no doubt information driven, and that Libraries and Information centers still remain one of the easily accessible places where current, accurate and reliable information for professional development can be sourced organised and transferred. Because of the vast opportunities offered by ICTs, the paper re-echoes the calls made by many Library and Information Scientists on the urgent need for Libraries and Information centers to acquire, utilize and harness the Information resources and services available globally through the ICTs for professional development. It concludes by calling on the NLA, especially now that we're registered, to put in place all the necessary programmes and activities for the professional development of Librarians and Information worker, as one scholar put it, "Physicians heal thyself"

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