Youth Participation and Contribution in Nation Building: The Role of Library and Information Centre

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study was carried out to assess the information needs of the youth, sources of service deliveries preferred, library usage and challenges of utilizing the libraries in two different youth engagements, in the rural urban community in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. All the youth that attended the Justice Development and Peace Commission Onitsha/ Voice to the People Project (JDPC/V2P) Girls Parliament program in Onitsha were used as respondents. They were 80 participants while random sampling was used in the rural community during youth needs assessment in March and September 2015, respectively. Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. A total of 150 copies of questionnaire were distributed to participants between the ages of 18 and 30 and a return rate of 73.3% was made. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts.

Findings: The results revealed that 80% of the youth needed information on governance and politics. They also assessed this information through the cyber cafe/internet and preferred online sources (83.6%). It was also discovered that 65.5% of them have visited the library which was the school library. The greatest challenge revealed was that there are no libraries in most of the communities (77.3%), which makes it hard for them to assess the needed information.

Implication: Solutions to challenges of relevant library and information services to youth participation and contribution in nation building include availability and effective service deliveries of information resources in ways that are desirable to the youth will add value to their activities and improve on their knowledge and participation in sustainable development programs in the nation.

Originality/Value: It was recommended that libraries should take proactive approaches in attracting users' needs as well as adopting today's technological devices in channeling information to the youths wherever they are.

Keywords: Community Development, Library and Information Resources; Information Center, Youth Participation and Contribution

Introduction

Youth in any country represent the future of that nation. They have vital roles to play in the development of the country, performing contributory duties for sustainable resilient communities. Oputeh (2015) stated that any nation that denies its youth the necessary enabling environment to participate in nation building processes does so at its own risk. This is because they are the foundation of any society. Their energies, resources, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labor, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio – political attainments (Onyekpe, 2007). Indeed, the nation finds motivation and builds strength in youth dreams, hopes and energies.

To make good and meaningful decision for nation building, the youths desire accurate, timely and vital information. The public libraries, especially and the community information centers help ensure access to free

information flow (Davis, 2007) that will help them make informed judgments and decisions. The daily demands for information are increasing rapidly, necessitating adequate provision of services for the community which is a crucial agenda as an essential part of community development, particularly for the youth, the future leaders of our nation (Siti, et al, 2012). Thus, as information and communication technology (ICT) play significant roles as sources of information, the public libraries and the information centers as well play the same roles in offering updated and needed information to the youth and community.

Today's youth have embraced internet and current technological devices which are alternative means of disseminating information. But then, they require guidance in assessing online resources in order to function effectively, whether in educational pursuit, economic venture, development or health related issues. In fact, they need good utilization of information services to become better citizens of tomorrow from learning of skills to functional livelihood, knowing how to read, write, think, understand, analyze and discuss the issues facing the country. Surajdeen (2016) succinctly put it that they should dwell on these five concepts which are patriotism, reading culture, critical reasoning, skill acquisition and policy making to function effectively. This is the reason libraries and information centers are vital in bridging the gap between knowledge and ignorance.

Hence, it is when relevant and effective information is disseminated that youth will love their country, live there and help in meeting world standard which will help to maintain a balance between their country and resources. The public libraries have the mandate to provide free and equitable access to information for all, be it in written, electronic or audio visual form to everybody whether in the city or in the rural community (Wallace Foundation, 2015). These libraries play a key role in creating literate environment and promoting literacy by offering relevant and attractive reading materials for all ages and all literacy levels. They also embrace the social responsibility to offer services that bridge social, political and economic barriers, together with making a special effort to extend their services to marginalized peoples.

However, the youths are restive (Anasi, 2010) and may not have the patient to search for what is not close to them. It behooves on the librarians in the libraries to package information and bring them close to the users wherever they may be. This is the only way service deliveries must be assured and users feel acknowledged and valued as important members of the society. Thus, librarians must be repositioned to serve the leaders of tomorrow. This is the only way the youth will be assimilated into development indices for sustainable society (Onwudinjo and Okeji, 2015).

Statement of the problem

Everybody needs access to communication and information in order to actively participate in the society. It is only through information that the youths can widen their horizon and fit into the developmental process in the society. Unfortunately, many Nigerian youth are lazy when it comes to reading and do not have the spirit of reading that will incorporate the civic responsibility of citizens and government roles in nation building (Surajdeen (2016). But when they read, they gain knowledge, become acquainted with the country's history and work hard to make meaningful development with sustainable changes.

It is only effective information services that will create opportunities for stimulating the minds into taking ownership of national projects and being part of decision making in the environment. Indeed, the youth without jobs and with no sense of direction to heroic contributions (Onyekpe, 2007) could easily become restive, thereby causing lawlessness and crime. This paper is therefore poised to find out what the youths really need as target information so that they can take their rightful place in active citizenship and support good governance for nation building.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to understand the information needs harness the information required by the youth in promoting nation building. Specifically, it sets to:

1. determine the information need of the youth
2. identify the sources of information preferred
3. examine the usage of the library and information center and
4. identify the challenges encountered in using the library and information center.

Literature review

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001) and Hino and Ranis (2014) defined youth as people aged 18 – 35 years. They constitute about 40 percent of more than 140 million people of Nigeria. The total population of youth between 10 and 24 in Nigeria was estimated at 45.4 million in 2006, which was 34 percent of the total population. Generally, youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have, therefore, needed to be developed and empowered. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are, potentially and actually the greatest investments for a country's development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001). These youths must be developed intellectually, morally, socially and with relevant skills to face a rapidly advancing technological world.

Since, information is so essential to nation building the library collates and makes it a basic necessity of everyday life (Sharma, 2013). According to Atuti (2008) library services can facilitate peoples' involvement in local consultation, help develop and support community (Abiona and Bello, 2013) organization and empowering role and promotion of democratic participation. All these are elements of nation building which Ajegbomogu (2009) supported by stating that information creates new ideas or knowledge for human use with the aim of modifying behavior, effecting changes and enhancing efficiency in all human endeavors. Nigerian youth are leaders of the future and need access to a wide range of information to gear them, deepen the choices they make in employment and educational opportunities.

Importantly, the young people have various information needs which may arise from curiosity, school assignments, personal situations and developmental stages of growth. Silvio (2006) studying Sudanese youth using semi – structured interviews, found that the youth's information needs are multitudinous including educational information, racism information, employment information, political information and health information. In addition to fulfilling their information needs, they prefer to use informal sources such as from trusted friends, relatives, co – workers rather than visiting the local public library. Hence, information gathering is a wide – range value

among the youth as it promotes education, independence, equality and health.

This presupposes the essentials of information to the youth population which must be provided in ways that are acceptable by them. Therefore, improving library collection by non- print materials (Popoola and Hauso, 2009) as well as having electronic resources would convince young people to make more use of libraries. The use of social media like facebook, twitter, whatsapp, U-tube, flicker as well as creation of specialized collections –have been noted to result in higher usage by young people. This was asserted by UNESCO (2015) who stated the need to access information on social issues and policies on a regular basis through media such as TV, community radio, mobile diffusion, Facebook, and public meetings/forums. These sources will contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights.

It is not enough to provide a library. The important thing is to make resources effectively and efficiently used by its clienteles/community (Adeleke, 2005). Effective information service delivery will increase the growing interest in the social impact of what libraries can offer and how they can contribute to the social cohesion and development of their communities. It will invariably help to inspire the imagination of the youth and induce usage of library and its resources. This is what defines the unique function of serving the growing generation, considering the fact that some people do not visit the library or information center, simply because they do not know the values it can impact on their development.

However, studies have shown that certain variables can prevent people from using the library. This could be natural and artificial barriers to free access to information which affect utilization of library difficulties. Islam and Mezbah-ul-Islamm (2011) stated that obstacles such as inadequate road and transport systems, cultural and linguistic diversity, and unequal social and educational levels, affect usage of libraries. On the contrary Iyoro (2004) pointed out that contribution of accessibility to learning processes can make users use the library more because information was easily and conveniently made accessible to them.

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey research carried out in two different youth engagements. The idea was to cover a wide range of youth activities and sample their opinion in different environment and activities. Thus, the sample respondents covered youths in two different engagements, in the community and the city. The engagements covered youths during JDPC and V2P youth activities in March and September 2015 in Anambra State, involving the Girls parliament platform and needs assessment of youths during voice to the people project (V2P) in pilot communities in March. Questionnaire was developed and used for data collection which covered information needs of the youth, sources, usage and challenges. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were distributed at both meetings and one hundred and ten (110) were duly filled and collected back. This was easy to achieve because two of the researchers are involved in the project that engaged youth empowerment program. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and the results were presented in tabular forms.

Results

Table 1: Information on the respondents

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Educational Level:		
• JSSCE	11	10
• SSCE	62	56.4
• OND/NCE	22	20
• HND/BLS	15	13.6
• MSC		
Employment Status:		
• Student	65	59.1
• Self Employed	10	9.1
• Employed	20	18.2
• Unemployed	15	13.6
Sex:		
• Male	32	29.1
• Female	78	70.9
Age:		
• 18 & Below	25	22.7
• 19-25	70	63.6
• 26-30	15	13.6
Marital Status:		
• Married	15	13.6
• Single	95	86.4

The demographic data showed that female respondents were 78 (70.9%) while male were 32 (29.1%). Again, 62 (56.4%) respondent have SSCE while 22 (20%) have OND/NCE. Others were 15 (13.6%) respondents with HND/BLS and 11(10%) respondents with JSSCE.

On employment status, 65 respondents were students, 20 were employed, 15 unemployed and 10 were self employed. More respondents fell under 19-25 which represented 70 respondents. 25 of them were eighteen years and below while fifteen fell under the ages of 26 to 30. Lastly, 95 of them were singe while 15 were married. This data showed that the respondents covered all aspects of youth characteristics.

Table 2: Types of information needed

S/N	Items	F	%
1.	Information about continuing education	70	63.6
2.	Information about employment	75	68.2
3.	Information about health	70	63.6
4.	Information about career	55	50
5.	Information about computer and internet	80	72.7
6.	Information about governance and politics	88	80
7.	Information about gender and marginalized groups	55	50

Table 2 revealed the information needs of the respondents as follows; 70 respondents needed information on continuing education and health, 88 respondents on governance and politics, 80 on computer and internet, 75 on employment and 55 on career and gender marginalized groups. This indicated the basic needs that are pertained to youth population.

Table 3: Sources of information

S/N	Location of information	F	%
1.	School	60	54.6
2.	Cyber café/Internet	92	83.6
3.	Community center	5	4.6
4.	Library	25	22.7
5.	Family/Friends	56	50.9
6.	Church	65	59.1
7	Government officials	12	10.9
8.	NGO	65	59.1

The respondents were asked to indicate their sources of information. It shows that 92 of them usually got information from cyber café/internet, 65 from churches and NGOs, 60 from school, 56 from family and friends and 25 from library. Others are 12 from government officials and 5 from community center. The indication here is that internet is widely used by the youths in information gathering.

Sources of information preferred

Table 4: How do you want your information?

S/N	Sources of information	F	%
1.	Online sources (computer, mobile phones, etc)	95	86.4
2.	Printed copies (books, newsletters, print out, etc)	15	13.6

Here, 95 respondents would rather want their information in soft copy while 15 respondents preferred printed document. This clearly depicts technological trend and the focus of youth preference.

Table 5: Library Usage

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever been to a library?		
• Yes	72	65.5
• No	38	34.5
Which library have you been to?		
• School	50	45.5
• Community	5	4.5
• Public	25	22.7
• academic	20	18.2
• Others		
Will you like to visit a library?		
• Yes	96	87.3
• No	-	
• Maybe	14	12.7

This Table sought for usage of library by the respondents. 72 respondents disclosed that they have been to the library while 38 have never been there. 50 have been to school library and 25 have been to public library. 20 respondents have been to academic library and 5 to community information centers. However, 96 respondents would like to visit the libraries while 14 were not so sure if they would like to visit the library.

Table 6: Challenges in visiting/using the library:

S/N	Library usage obstacles	F	%
1.	Lack of time	68	61.5
2.	No library in my community	85	77.3
3.	No library in my school	35	31.8
4.	Library is far from where I live	45	40.9
5.	I have other places to get information	50	45.5
6.	Not interested in library	8	7.3

The challenges of youth library usage show that there are no libraries to access in the communities as rated by 85 respondents. While 68 respondent rated time constraint, 50 noted that they have other places of getting information and 45 ticked that library is far from their residential areas. Again, 35 said there is no library in their school and 8 respondents noted that they are simply not interested in library. People have real obstacles in going to the library.

Analysis

The youths sampled in the study showed that young people in their prime were more inclined to educational and employment statuses. This affirmed the study of Atuti (2008) which noted that the needed age group requires all the basic information for functional existence in the society. This group needs the valuable assets of information and knowledge to developed and be empowered, socially and economically.

With their information needs basically leaned onto governance/politics, computer and internet, health, employment and education (Table 2), it buttresses the study of Silvio (2006) on the essentials of obtaining information for the youth. This demonstrated the needs to access information on social issues and policies (UNESCO, 2015). Although, Shaifuddin, Ahmad and Mokhtar (2011) reported that all youth information needs could not be met because the needs are many. But then, they are worth seeking for while provisions are sought for service delivery.

It is interesting to note that the respondents favored their most source of information to come from cyber cafe/internet. UNESCO (2015) called it easily regular basis through media such as TV, community radio, mobile diffusion, Face book, and public meetings/forums. The internet is a great potential as it connects and networks with many people, simultaneously without geographical barrier. This makes it easily accessible with amazing speed that appeals as primary sources of information obtained by teens Shenton (2004), summarized. Therefore, the libraries must step in integrating social media and internet based dissemination of information in order to need the demands of growing population in an information soceity.

The role of library in enriching, vitalizing and humanizing the educational programmes makes it a valuable asset to visit and use in gaining knowledge (Table 5). This was emphasized by Obinyan, Obinyan, Oluwatoyin and Aidenojie (2011) as information is everything to an inquisitive mind which can be used for the national growth and common good. It also helps in curbing restiveness as related by the study of Omotayo (2005) and Echezona (2007).

The challenges of lack of library in some communities, distance, lack of time among others as reported in Table 6 emphasized the reasons many people do not visit the libraries or information centers to access information. This could be the reason many youth, especially in the rural communities do not follow up on developmental programs and policy dialogues. But with easy access to information centers they will acquire information, improve on their knowledge and participate in sustainable development activities in their areas.

Conclusion and recommendation

A lot has been written about libraries and information centers, together with their

important roles in enriching the youths and the society. This study has outlined the needs which cut across the governance issues, employment, internet, health among others. It ascertained that the preference of online sources and resources of information services could affect information retrieval and utilization. It has also revealed that some young people do not access information from the library because they are not available in their environment. Hence, libraries, especially the public sector needs to take proactive approach in attracting users to use their resources and services. This could be used to check the type of resources and channels of information as today's technological trend has dictated the use of electronic devices in information dissemination.

Therefore, different strategies can be used to reach out to more communities and more people wherever they may be. This is will be more effective if needs assessment are carried out first in order to know the exact information people require. The government has the role of investing in libraries and information centers so that citizens everywhere will benefit from information services. Developing youth potentials through information is the only way they can contribute and participate as active citizens for the development of the nation.

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