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## Knowledge Sharing: Key To Bridging Quality Library And Information Science Services Delivery In Rural Areas

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**Knowledge Sharing: Key To Bridging Quality  
Library And Information Science Services Delivery  
In Rural Areas**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Knowledge sharing and its delivery is one of the major aspect of human existence in academic especially in library and information science service delivery. Therefore, the role librarians have in sharing knowledge are enormous given the task ahead of them. This paper focuses on knowledge sharing as key to bridging quality library and information science services delivery in rural areas. The paper discussed the concept of knowledge sharing, rural communities, impact of knowledge sharing by library and information science to rural communities, its constraints and the way forward. After which recommendations and conclusion were made.

**Keywords:** Knowledge sharing; Library and Information Science, Rural Communities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge is the major aspect of human existence and it is central to the growth and development of the Universe. Knowledge is considered as a fundamental aspect and most crucial activity of knowledge management. Knowledge management which is to spread and make knowledge accessible and usable within or between chosen organizations. According to the English online dictionary (Wikyionary.org), knowledge is the awareness of a particular fact or situation; a state of having been informed or made aware of something.

Tella (2016) also views knowledge as a critical and strategic resources that leads to new ideas, and spurs innovation, improves employees' performance and supports innovations in organizations. This enumerates why knowledge sharing is important in all professions especially in library and Information Science discipline.

## **THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

Knowledge sharing have been defined in many ways by different authors. But we shall discuss or review literatures on authors related to Librarianship. In the view of Paulin (2012), the encyclopedia of knowledge

management (Schwart, 2006) in which several definitions of knowledge sharing are presented as follows, "knowledge sharing is the exchange of knowledge between and among individuals, and within and among organizations. Knowledge sharing is an exchange of knowledge between two individuals, one who communicates knowledge and one who assimilates it". In knowledge sharing, the focus is on human capital and the interaction of individuals, strictly speaking, knowledge can never be shared. This is because it exist in a context; the receiver interprets it in the light of his or her own background.

Furthermore, Cheng, Ho and Lau (2009) also reviewed sharing knowledge as communicating knowledge within a group of people. The group may be members of institutions, or rural communities. The aim being to improve the groups performance or to develop their potential within the context of rural areas based on local availability. (Salisbury (2003).

Cabrera, Collins and Salgado (2006) reported that knowledge sharing consist of two major elements: seeking information and ideas from co-workers and providing ideas and insights to others. This means that Library and Information Science is the key to bridging quality service delivery to all

especially rural communities. Knowledge sharing enables librarians to share information, experiences which involves learning, understanding, extending, repeating information, ideas, view and resources among persons, groups connected on a specific location.

Burch (2007) believed that they are conditions for sharing knowledge they are as follows:

- The more knowledge is shared, the more it grows.
- Knowledge can't be transferred, only shared.
- Everyone in the group has valuable knowledge and experience with regard to the topics for which the gathering has been organized.
- Diversity of experiences and opinions must be respected in order to enable sharing.
- Since every participant has knowledge concerning the topic under discussion, the contribution of each person is equally valuable.
- Within the group, with regard to the specific topics, either no one is an expert or we are all experts'.
- It's recognized that the contributions of other transform and augment both individual and collective knowledge.

- It's recognized that time is scarce such that it's important to respect the time allocated for each to speak making clear that additional time taken by one person to speak limits other's participation and hinders the interaction process.

## **THE ROLE OF LIS IN SERVICE DELIVERY**

While libraries in developing countries are perceived as tools for mass education for population thirsting for knowledge, the same in some African countries are functioning as relatively passive, building – based serve, which makes it impossible to reach out to a social distant group, in this case, the isolated rural dwellers. (Issa, Igwe&Uzuegbu 2013). This is the gap created by public library system in Africa which the evolution of community information centre's can fill. While library & information science centres are libraries established to serve government and the general public, community information centres are there to meet information needs of the isolated rural dwellers, more importantly by providing them with information that will aid hands- on and results in their various kinds of production. This type of services is rare to find in Nigeria especially in the eastern part of Nigeria and has got to begin with earnest especially in this 21th century.

Information provision and sharing has been the role of library and information professionals who has remained the skilled set of personal that understand the technique of knowledge. Library and information professionals have all the time of serving people with their needed information.

Furthermore, Issa ,Igwe&Uzuegbu 2013) views that they professionally know how to diagnose information needs consequently render information services that will meet the needs of the users. Library and information professionals are educators in all fields of knowledge, always having access to knowledge that will educate their clients. This means that they are the key to community and rural areas. The library, as a structure, has got the power over its society, bringing different people together and serving them according to their needs. Thus, the library professional are trained to attract various people together with information that will be beneficial to the rural community, information provision and knowledge sharing both in the field of agricultural practices, as a job which Librarians trained as community information providers can do, even in a way that it will concern agricultural practices.



## **RURAL COMMUNITIES AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

A rural community is composed of people who interact on regular basis around a common set of issues, interests or needs in a non- urban area. (Lesser, Fontaine &Slusher 2012). Any community in a rural area engage them-selves in various activities, live together, share knowledge and help each other in their daily activities. As members of the community interact; the build relationships that enables them to learn from each other.

Within communities, some members may share more common interests, involve themselves in similar activities, and interact much; there people are likely to frequently share knowledge. Member of the same community have similar practices thus sharing knowledge help them perform their activities better.

According to Ranmuthugala et al (2011), members of rural communities share knowledge to perform their day to day activities. The level of social interaction is usually higher among rural community members who share common interest. This adds to the views of Rivera (2011) that members of the same community are at a position of creating and sharing more social interactions.

According to Burch (2007) knowledge creation and sharing was influenced by social cultural practices in rural areas. Some studies on knowledge sharing on rural communities also reported that farming communities frequently shared knowledge among each other as livestock keepers did among themselves (Lwoga 2009; Mtega, 2008). Live stock herders shared knowledge on pasture and animal diseases among themselves.

Farmers on the other hand, shared knowledge on crop husbandry practices and zero grazing techniques. (Lwoga, 2009) found that even among clan members, labour was divided by gender which also influences the way knowledge was shared among members of the same clan. Mtega (2008) found that female in rural area were involved in cooking and meals preparation for the males, for this, female were gained more knowledge related in cooking and other domestic activities.

Furthermore, Burch (2007) found out that the nature of daily activities rural people involved themselves in, is determined by the types of ICTs tools to use for sharing studies. Sife, (2010); Mtega, (2008) further shows that among the livestock keepers, radio sets and mobile phones were used for knowledge sharing. Due to the liberalization networks have extended

their mobile phone services to rural areas and subsidized the cost of mobile phones. This project enables farmers to subscribe to a service to receive information from each other for their daily activities.

A report from (Semantic Scholar retrieved) also shows that knowledge sharing for forums are convened to promote the exchange of local agricultural information among farmers, using participatory peer to peer education and learning, forums are usually themed around generating information for a targeted crop or livestock type e.g goats, chickens etc. The farmers choose amongst themselves as convener to facilitate the discussion using participatory methods.

In the participatory method, women also gain more especially during their community meeting (August meeting gathering) where women invite other instructors from the urban areas who come to teach these women entrepreneurial skills in both areas of human endeavour enabling growth for sharing knowledge.

## **IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING BY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Knowledge sharing has strong influence on organizations, institutions, rural communities in performance as a second latent variable. It is

important for humanity to invest and focus on knowledge sharing. Activity as it would create a platform for innovation thus enhances performance. The library and information professionals serve as a communication bridge between the government, development agencies, urban dwellers and rural community to disseminate information and knowledge for proper usage.

According to Issa (2013), community information centres are subsidiaries of public libraries and they are there to meet the information needs of the isolated rural dwellers and more importantly, by providing them with information that will aid hand-on and ensure results in their various kinds of production. In recent times, community information centres through the public libraries have started creating awareness in the rural communities through public meeting in which a facilitator helps community members to conduct discussions on the development priorities of the community.

Group meetings where many social-cultural group meetings in the rural areas especially the women August meetings, Umuada meetings, Umunna meetings, Umu-okoro meeting (in the Igbo setting) exist in which specific groups meet to discuss their own information needs. The national planning commission (2009) in collaboration with public libraries have started

creating awareness on the use of ICT farming machines in Agriculture. This is what Kranich (2001) called "Civic awareness and Community revival". Hence this takes to the fact that community information centre services are crucial to national development and rural community development.

In the view of Uzuegbu (2013), the people's Republic of China (Tang and Wu, 2009), Botswana Ghana, Indonesia and Tanzania all have similar goal, though not exactly as Nigeria but the aim is the same which is to equip libraries to share knowledge irrespective of your locality, primary occupation, dialect, back ground and identity (Hakler, 2010). It is imperative to note that the provision of library and information services to rural communities through knowledge sharing brings the rural dwellers close to government goals. They inform the rural people of what they need to do or apply to get maximum result in their varying field of work, irrespective of their level of education and exposure.

Uzuegbu (2013) reported a clear example of knowledge sharing as a bridge to quality services delivery. About an agricultural Extension Officer who undergone a training excursion in the agricultural research institute. The man came back with improved yam tuber and parts and went into a rural

village called Amizi village in Olokoru, Umuahia South, Abia State where he experimented the planting of the yam tubers in various farm land of some of the villagers and watch what he was doing. During the cultivation period, the sizes of the tubers and appearance got the attention of all the rural members who stumbled onto them. It is clear that what this Agricultural Extension Officer did then is called "a Community service" aimed at educating and sharing knowledge to the community people on adopting and planting improved species of plants, tubers and crops. That extension service was sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The rural people were supposed to be practicing or using what was taught to them but their was no sufficient improved tubers to go round, hence the factors militating against provision of quality service delivery to rural communities.

## **CONSTRAINTS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Several challenges are confronting the provision of library and information service through knowledge sharing in rural communities.

- According to Igwe & Onah (2013), absence of relevant government policies for overall library development and services in all sectors of

Nigeria. This connotes that the government in all ramifications is no stranger to economic reforms. Over the years Nigeria has come up with different reforms of which the latest one is the transformation agenda of President Muhammdu Buhari which is aimed at improvement in the Agricultural Sectors, entrepreneurship skills and to tackles economic and in security.

The Economic Transformation Blueprint of President Goodluck Jonathan also tried in the empowerment and revitalization of rural areas of Nigeria in his "Nigeria Vision 2020" which was also aimed at ensuring food security and reducing extreme hunger and thus increasing the agricultural output of small holder farmers through provision of improved seedlings and fertilizer. But all these reforms are silent on how to get the rural dwellers participate and share in the national development. Providing the farmers with improved seedlings and fertilizer may not help the farmer, but providing the necessary information on how to plant the improved seedlings and apply the fertilizer will go along way in sharing knowledge not only for a farmer but the entire community.

- Poor state of existing public libraries and Absence of community libraries and information centres: community Information Centres are

libraries domiciled in economically disadvantaged communities (rural communities). Aitchison (2006) has pictured such libraries to represent a centre for provision of information rather than a venue for recreational reading. A Community Information Centre is established in order to motivate, empower and enable the local people to participate in programmes aimed at meeting their socio-economic, educational and cultural needs.

Consequently, the poor state of these public and community information centres are nothing to write home about. These public libraries and community information centres are particularly state owned institutions and are poorly funded. Edom (2013) reports that poor funding basically reflects in public libraries which is the most important in the area of education. When the library is starved of funds, it will be difficult for it to work effectively and efficiently.

- Inadequacy of human, infrastructural and information resources available for quality service delivery. Change is a very necessary end in knowledge sharing services. There should be a regular training and retraining of staff in any growing profession otherwise the profession will go into oblivion. The way libraries were managed in the 70s and 80s



is not how they should be managed in the global age, where information technologies has taken over. The old staff of any professional should avail him or herself or retaining in other to be updated with the recent ICT developments, Unegbu (2013) observed that change is a phenomenon that is inevitable for progress. It is not easily accepted in any society because of fear of the unknown. Librarians should attend workshops, seminars, conferences in other to know the recent ways to go about sharing knowing for quality service delivery both in urban and rural communities.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

In the competitive world today, majority of the institutions are gradually realizing the significance of knowledge sharing among individuals, organizations and rural communities. It is being identified as an essential constituent for success. The development of knowledge sharing platforms and learning technology is playing a substantial role in eliminating communication impediments and incrementing the straight forwardness and efficiency of information sharing in workplace especially Library and Information Science Service ([yourtrainingedge.com](http://yourtrainingedge.com)).

In the view of Uzuegbu (2013), the resource of library are usually equaled to the type of users the library serves. Hence, to provide information services to rural communities a people assumed to be illiterates, some resources should be made available: Audio resources. Studiers from Kalungwizi, 8 Msuya (2013) showed that a radio based extension system for sharing agricultural knowledge was successful in the rural communities in Tanzania because farmers and other rural people preferred to access knowledge from trustworthy sources. This means that if the radio based extension is adapted for use, it will be useful in providing information even for those illiterates because the informationist will use the language the rural people understands (local dialect).

Agricultural extension staff, churches and library staff: studies by Lwoga (2009) and Chilimo (2008) found that most rural areas had both formal and informal sources of knowledge. Formal knowledge accessed through extension agents, libraries and the radio, informed sources contained indigenous knowledge and were more dominant as most rural people consulted them. Indigenous was accessed when an individual socialized with family members, neighbours, relatives and friends. This means that the Librarian who is the information provider has a lot of work to do. He

provides information to the Agricultural extension staff, churches, radio broadcaster and to the target audience, anticipating their needs and then plan specific strategies that will make them value, use the available information.

It is also pertinent to know that sharing knowledge by Library and Information Science Service delivery to rural community involve outreach programmes. Uzuegbu (2013) explained that the ability to reach out to isolated and excluded people within the community who may not respond to being physically drawn into the community information centre that is the elderly, thus providing home information delivery services is essential. This means that establishing and organizing activities and competitions such as football, quiz (in their local dialect), dancing competition etc such that can attract youths, women or men are ways of drawing individuals who may not utilize print material but will be informally introduced to them while participating in the activities.

Lastly, the government and non-governmental institutions should support both in policy and decision making and in funding public libraries so as to equip them in providing, sharing knowing to rural community and the society at large.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Knowledge sharing by library and information science service delivery to rural communities is possible and can be achieved through establishment of village community information centre and this is a pathway to transformation and development to our nation's rural communities. The government should commence the processes of providing and sharing information to rural communities through information gurus in order to limit the shortcomings of the rural dwellers in Nigeria.

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