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Abstract

A society properly rooted in indigenous knowledge system can easily pave way for sustainable development. Indigenous knowledge is a local knowledge that is peculiar to a particular society. It is referred to as folk knowledge, people's knowledge, traditional science or traditional wisdom. Over time, indigenous knowledge is usually generated and transmitted by communities, in an attempt to solve their own societal challenges such as ecological and socio-economic problems. Indigenous knowledge is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and has been the basis for agriculture, food preparation and conservation, health care, education, and the wide range of other activities that sustain a society and its environment in different parts of the world for many centuries. This realization that true development cannot take place without member of the society being able to have equal access to knowledge gave birth to the idea of the knowledge society for a sustainable development. Sustainable development emphasized the development in all aspects of human life affecting sustenance. It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals and the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity with progress as the major objective. The paper also identified the challenges of indigenous knowledge to include funding, time requirement, labour requirement, ICTs etc. Finally, the paper highlighted the strategies to mitigate these challenges; Nigeria libraries should make effort to persuade traditional institutions and elderly who are resource persons in local communities to share their indigenous knowledge with librarians for proper documentation, preservation and accessibility; Libraries should as a matter of urgency repackage the documented indigenous knowledge in different languages for easy access.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous Knowledge, Knowledge Societies, Sustainable Development, Communities, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge is an enabling component of development and many Nigerians are aware of the relationship between indigenous knowledge and development (Ekere, 2009). For some years now, policy makers, development planners, information professionals, librarians and the public at large have become increasingly aware of the important role indigenous knowledge can play in the promotion of sustainable development as well as having the potentials to help saves lives, increase food security and income. Nandi et al (2013) in their publication opined that since indigenous knowledge is essential in development, it is often suggested that it must be gathered and documented in a coherent and systematic fashion.

Nandi (2013) defined indigenous knowledge as knowledge that is peculiar to a traditional community which have been accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation. James D. wolfensohn, one time president of World Bank defined indigenous knowledge as "integral part of the culture and history of a local community. We need to learn from local communities to enrich the development process" Nakata and Langton (2005) defined indigenous knowledge as knowledge , innovation and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world, developed from experience over centuries, and adapted to local culture and environment, transmitted orally from generation to generation. This knowledge is passed from one generation to another by word of mouth and cultural rituals, norms, beliefs, proverbs, and has been the basis for Agricultural practices and wide range of other activities that sustain a society and its environment in many parts of the world for many centuries. The value of such knowledge could strengthen cultural identity and enhance social and developmental goals. This could be in areas of art, agriculture, craft, medicine, music, natural resources management, and theatre and disaster management.

The study of indigenous knowledge in the library profession in our educational system is very crucial and imperative. This is because indigenous knowledge has been applied and is still been applied in so many areas. In the work of Makinde and Shorunke (2013), indigenous knowledge is important in health care system as they observed that human beings are both somatic and spiritual entity and diseases could be supernatural causes arising from anger of ancestral or evil spirit, the result of witch crafts or the entry of an object into the body. Therefore it is not only the type of disease that is taken into account but also psychological and sociological factors. They further observed that multinational, corporation; universities, research institutions and private firms are harnessing local knowledge system and resources. They pointed out that classification of soil and such factors as soil color and textures emerged as key common factors in indigenous soil knowledge.

The library profession and libraries in general be it Academic, special or public recognize indigenous knowledge as an important sources of development information. Over centuries, people have learnt how to grow food and to survive in difficult environments. It highlight indigenous knowledge as the basis for community level decision making in areas pertaining to food security, human and animal health, educational resources management and other vital economic and social activities. The valuable and Sophiscated knowledge is validated over time in a way that is different to western empirical system (Atoma, 2011). Indigenous knowledge is used to sustain the community and its culture. Placing value on indigenous knowledge could strengthen cultural identity and also to achieve social and development goal such as sustainable Agriculture, affordable and appropriate public health.

According to George & Sieglinde (2017), Agricultural and social scientists have been aware of the existence of Indigenous knowledge since colonial times, but from the early 1980s,

understanding of farmers' practices as rational and valid has rapidly gained ground. From their work, two contrasting interpretations of indigenous knowledge are:

1. Local knowledge is a huge, largely untapped resource that can be removed from its context and applied and replicated in different places (like formal science). Proponents of this perspective have scientifically validated indigenous knowledge or sought similarities and complementarities between their knowledge and farmer's knowledge. Farming system approaches and participatory research and development largely follow this thinking.

2. Indigenous knowledge is based on empirical experience and is embedded in both biophysical and social contexts. And cannot easily be removed from them. It follows that the process by which indigenous knowledge is created is as important as the products of this research.

The following subheadings will form the basis of this research work:

- Concept of knowledge societies and sustainable development
- Areas of application of indigenous knowledge (IK)
- Challenges associated with indigenous knowledge system
- Strategies for overcoming the challenges.

Concept of knowledge societies and sustainable Development

The importance of knowledge in the current dispensation cannot be over-emphasized as societies and organization in them are gauged based on the amount of knowledge that is created, disseminated and utilized or applied to enhance development. This realization that true development cannot take place without member of the society being able to have equal access to

knowledge gave birth to the idea of the knowledge society. It came as a proposed alternative to the information society in the realization that the touted information society characterized by inequalities in information acquisition, processing and utilization had created a huge divide between the have and have-nots, the rich and poor and the elite and commoner. It was obvious that the information society was exclusive, deficient in nature and could not guarantee the empowerment of the greater majority of people (Dike 2009).

According to UNESCO (2005) cited in the work of Okeke, et al (2013), a knowledge society is a society that is based on the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge for subsequent production of new knowledge. Such society has an economy in which knowledge is acquired or created, disseminated and applied to enhance economic and social development. Because such a society is heavily knowledge dependent, it is capable of turning a piece of information into entrepreneurship for the benefit of business, government and non-governmental agencies. Abdulsalami, Okezie & Agbo (2013) in their work affirmed that societies that set up institutions and organizations enabling people and information to develop without limits and open opportunities for all kinds of knowledge to be mass produced and mass utilized are knowledge societies. Dike (2005) rightly opined that information to little if not put to use. For information to be deemed beneficial it must be transformed to knowledge. Dike pointed out the characteristics features of knowledge societies.

- Knowledge societies are pluralistic and culturally diverse;
- Knowledge societies are democratic;
- Knowledge societies are learning societies;
- Knowledge societies are foster full human development;
- Knowledge societies build better futures.

Sustainable development cannot be understood except when separated and examined as two words. Development according to WCED Report, 1987 can be seen as that which has to do with the progressive transformation of economy and society. According to Olutayo and Bankole (2006), development involves the process of change in the environment, a central ingredient in the transformation of any society. Isamah (2002) sees development as quantitative and qualitative transformation of societies from one stage to another. From the above it is obvious that the various interpretation of the concept of development showed that development has its overriding objective on the enhancement of the quality of people's lives and livelihood through the satisfaction of needs (Okeke,et al 2013).

Sustainability on the other hand denotes the process of maintaining or ensuring continuity. It is about making sure that a system or process will survive the present without causing damage to the environment or jeopardizing the future (Longman Dictionary, 2005). The expression "sustainable development" was first used in 1987, at the world commission on environment and development held in Oslo to mean "the development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987) cited in Rita, J.O(2013). Ahmed (2007) sees sustainable development as maintaining development over time.

Sustainable development talks about the development in all aspects of human life affecting sustenance. It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals and the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity with progress as the major objective. Sustainable development recognizes that the basic needs of all should be met while at the same time extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life (WCED, 1987).The whole essence of sustainable development focuses on how

nations, communities, individuals and other global stakeholders can meet their developmental needs. It stresses a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental issues in our everyday decision making processes and; and encourages government, institutions, corporate organizations, communities, families and individuals to take responsible decisions with the wellbeing of the whole environment in mind rather than just their own selfish ends (Sampson,2013). Hence sustainable development is a continually evolving process from generation to generation.

Areas of application of indigenous knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is used at the local level by communities in developing countries as the basis for decision making pertaining to culture, food, security, human and animal health, education, natural resource management, social and skill development and other vital activities (Nnadi, C.U et al 2013). According to UNEP (1998C), indigenous knowledge can be applied in the area of management of natural disaster. The planting of trees, vegetations along river bank or certain areas to prevent encroachment of erosion is one of disaster prevention. It can be equally applied in ecological management and maintain ecosystem. Eg indigenous inspired forestry practices serve to conserve the structure and forest maintenance of both hard wood and coniferous trees. Etc.

However, makinde and shorunke (2013) citing castello (1999), categorized three broad aspect of indigenous knowledge. They include:

i. Traditional knowledge which is generational knowledge that is passed from generation to generation.

ii.   Empirical knowledge which is based on observation of the surrounding environment (nature, culture and society).

iii.   Revealed knowledge which is provided through dreams, visions and institutions.

Indigenous knowledge is applied to health care system. It is common knowledge that traditional medicine is been used today (Nnadi, *et al*. 2013). As observed by Makinde and shorunke (2013), human are both somatic and spiritual entity. This implies therefore that diseases can be as a result of both physical and spiritual problem. As said earlier, indigenous knowledge is holistic in outlook: so in disease treatment it considers both physical and spiritual aspect of it.

Challenges associated with indigenous knowledge system

In every knowledge society, dealing with indigenous knowledge system is always faced with a lot of challenges in terms of its documentation, preservation and dissemination. Liauw, (2005) pointed out that one major problem of indigenous knowledge is inferiority syndrome, which holds that knowledge generated by the west is superior to indigenous knowledge. This condition has contributed to the low appreciation of local information resources which in the end impede the development of the resource. The indispensability of knowledge itself to human progress is a fact taken for granted and manifested in all human activities.

Okorie *et al.* (2009) pointed out the following challenges of associated with indigenous knowledge system. They includes: Time requirement, Labour requirement, Funding and Reluctances of indigenous people to share their knowledge competition with the existing structures for indigenous knowledge. Collecting and documentation of indigenous knowledge is time consuming and very cumbersome. The librarian also needs both mental and physical man-power in other to achieve all that is required which is labour intensive. Another key factor is the

issue of funding. There is need to provide adequate fund to take care of all the materials , instruments and equipment needed to collect, document and preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge such as cam coders, computers and laptops, digital cameras etc.

Indigenous knowledge is a body of knowledge that is very important to human existence but the challenges associated with it deter its success by information professionals. According to Dike (2007) in Ekere (2009), the death of an old man or woman in Africa is like burning down an entire library. This is because indigenous knowledge is communicated from older generation to younger generation and as a result of this, it disappears with cultural homogenization of the death of people. Secrecy is another challenge facing indigenous knowledge system. The oath of secrecy taken by members of some families or cult and the sacredness of the materials are drastic impediments. Sometimes members die with their knowledge or reveal it on their dying bed.

Strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with indigenous knowledge system in Nigeria.

Identifying problem is the first step to solving it. These challenges are sometimes natural and some are caused by the activities of human being in our societies. In respect to some of the challenges highlighted above, the following strategies will go along away to ameliorate or cushion the challenges of indigenous knowledge system in our societies.

> ➢ Nigeria libraries should make effort to persuade traditional institutions and elderly who are resource persons in local communities to share their indigenous knowledge with librarians for proper documentation, preservation and accessibility (Nnadi, *et al.,* 2013). They can achieve this by taken into cognizance the need to protect the right of indigenous people over their traditional knowledge.

- Libraries should as a matter of urgency repackage the documented indigenous knowledge in different languages for easy access.
- Libraries should create inventories registers and bibliographies of indigenous knowledge to help users have quick access to the documented indigenous knowledge as noted by (Ngulube, 2002).
- There is need to package indigenous knowledge in Audio visual media, for further generations to enjoy as proper record keeping among others in an effective tool in the management of indigenous knowledge information.
- Libraries should organize seminar, workshops, talk show etc involving the local communities and extract and record information on various professions like craft, Agriculture, health, natural disaster, conflict management and ecological management among others.
- Another strategy is to overcome these challenges is the provision of ICTs resources such as phones, laptop and computers, internet facilities, digital cameras, camcorders, video and tape recorders etc to allow libraries to document and disseminate indigenous knowledge information.
- Indigenous knowledge need to be institutionalized. Universities in Africa especially Nigeria are the obvious institutions to undertake this important task. However, African university has a poor record of achievement in research, innovation and community engagement. Some work of indigenous knowledge for example on traditional healing and use of medicinal plant has been carried out in African universities but it seems disparate. Similarly, Makinde and Shorunke (2013) observed that multinational corporations,

universities, research institutions and private firms are harnessing local knowledge system and resources.

Conclusion

The indigenous knowledge system is in a better position strategically for promoting knowledge society for sustainable development if properly tapped and preserved. This is because indigenous knowledge is very critical in the application of human endeavors like health, Agriculture, farming, ecology etc. However librarians and researchers tend to face numerous challenges in exploring the indigenous knowledge system such as lack of proper preservation and documentation, funding, provision of ICTs facilities etc. These challenges can be surmountable if the libraries and librarians stand up to their responsibilities by doing the needful in terms of packaging IK in audio visuals, solicit for more funds and preserve it for future generations.

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