

Research Article

Library Services as an Instrument for Attaining Sustainable Development Goals in Early Childhood Care in Nigeria

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This paper examines library services as a tool for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in early Childhood Care Education. The paper therefore revolves on conceptual clarification of education, Early Childhood Care Education, sustainable development, library services and sustainable Development Goals. The paper revealed that library services include provision of information resources, access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and lending services. Challenges are inadequate school libraries, poor funding, and lack of awareness among parents. Suggestions to the challenges are adequate school and public libraries, adequate funding, adequate trained information professionals (Librarians), encouraging indigenous publications among several others. The paper concludes by calling on major stakeholders in education and professional librarians to provide enabling environment that will enhance effective and efficient library services for the attainment of SDGs in Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria.

Key Words: Sustainable Development Goals SDG, Early childhood, ICT, Information resources, Nigeria, Library service and Parents

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are conceived in the womb; after which they are delivered as human beings. The process of child development starts more adequately immediately after birth. This stage requires good care and nurture. It is on this premise that early childhood care education comes into play. Maduwesi and Agusiobo cited by Udom, Obadiah and Hussaini (2018) posit that Early Childhood Care Education is the foundation for the growth and future development of all children and is accepted as the education given to children under six (6) years old.

Since children face problems in the development of reading, talking, writing and other related challenges associated with Early Childhood Care Development, libraries therefore, can address these challenges by providing adequate services to the children in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under goal 4. Accordingly, the paper examines the services provided by libraries for effective Early Childhood Care Education as enshrined by SDGs and also engaged in cursory look at conceptual clarification.

Conceptual Clarification

Education is a fundamental tool in the development programme of both the developed and developing nations. The goal of education is to impart knowledge and also to develop the capacity to learn. Akpan (1999) in Adeleke, Maduagwu and Paul (2017) supported this view when they cited Fafunwa Thus:

Education comprises all efforts, conscious, direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of individual needs as well as the needs of the society where the programme is based

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Mamvoto and Mutasa (2004) shows that schooling and literacy are the main indicators for the growth and maturation of human resources needed for the development which has an implication for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the same vein Oloruntoba (1989) in Adeleke *et al.*, (2017) submit that education is the key to any meaningful planning and national awareness and the more we are educated the more we are likely to develop. He agrees that the rate of development of any nation depends on her level of education. Hence there is need to support our present level of education right from the grassroots with adequate library infrastructures. This will be achieved through library services in aspiration to attain sustainable development goals in Nigeria by 2030.

Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) is concerned with the care and education of children between the age brackets (0-6years) or just before the age of formal schooling. This age is perceived as the period of immense opportunity for growth and development. Sule (2008) observed that Early Childhood Care Education determines the success and failure of the entire system. He further explains that Early Childhood Care Education promotes skill acquisition as well as the development of sound character in order to improve society.

Children and adolescents need books and libraries in their life development. This is why adequate and equipped libraries should exist in the pre-primary, primary and post-primary schools in order to promote teaching and learning activities that exist in the schools (Oyedum, 2014). She further submits that libraries give children access to all media, empowering them to advocate for their freedom and safety and encouraging them to become confident and competent people, giving them their first experience of being citizen in their own right. Libraries equip children with lifelong learning and literacy skills, enabling them to actively participate and contribute their quota to societal development. Islam (2004) defines library as a learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the source of information accessed by library users. Library services are needed to keep the skills that have been acquired through literacy classes alive by the provision of good literature. If education is to produce happier individual and a better society, the providers of education must go further than their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of the learners.

Metzger (1991) ascertains that Library services are needed to enable the individual develop full potentials and widening the horizons of perception, interests and skills. Other needs for library services include; public awareness, understanding social values and expected conduct in

public life; assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of society to cultivate and maintain reading, culture and promotion of good literatures. Libraries play an indispensable role in Early Childhood Care Education. Library services are a prime factor in a nation, social, economic and cultural development (Edegbe, 2001). This also corroborates with the submission of Forysth (2006), who asserts that libraries have the potential to play a significant role in supporting and contributing in the achievement of sustainable development goals is not a mirage. Therefore, libraries have a big and important role to play in the attainment of SDGs by the year 2030.

Sustainable development is maintaining a delicate balance between the human needs to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend. Sustainable development respects the limited capacity of an ecosystem to absorb the impact of human activities. There is no single definition for Sustainable development, (add) but the common key idea to all definitions is resource exploitation that would not prove detrimental to future generations. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising future generations to meet their own needs. That is, a better quality of life now and for future generations. Supporting this, Akintoye and Adejumo (2014), are of the view that, sustainable development contains two key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the poor world, to which overriding priority should be given, and the idea of the limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. Therefore, sustainable development could be referred to the management of national resources for human survival, taking into consideration the present and future generation.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The Sustainable Development Summit that took place in United Nation New Yorkin September, 2015 brought together leaders all over the world to adopt a universal agenda, setting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change (UN, 2015). The goals are to:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere by the 2030.
2. End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being for all people at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation.

7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in addition to full and productive employment and decent work for all people.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

LIBRARY SERVICES AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Children are among the special group of users of the library in Nigeria. They are future leaders, who need to be integrated into the societal dealings early enough; therefore, information resources are needed to facilitate this process towards the realization of sustainable development goals. Moreover, children's library provides educational, recreational and cultural resources for children below the age of 6. It contains a large collection of picture books and multimedia materials. In addition to the reading area, children's library may contain a computer laboratory and activities room (Oguike and Chukwu, 2014). The relevance of library services as a tool for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in early childhood care education are discussed as follows:

Provision of information resources

The libraries are adjudged as institutions that are geared towards the provision of library materials for children between the age bracket of 6-11 years for their mental and psychological development. However, the SDGs in Early Childhood Care Education sees the need for early education of the child, and libraries provide materials such as picture books, multimedia materials, fiction books, nursery rhymes, and poetry. These information resources have great impact in the child early education development of the Nigerian children in the following areas:

- **Correction:** A child may learn without making many mistakes. He can learn from the experiences of other children, and **from** reading books. Children literature can be corrective, instructive and directive.
- **Agent of moralization:** library information resources can also serve as agents of moralization for the young reader, whereby good children are rewarded and bad children are punished. Early children's books took great advantage of this fact. Bello and the greedy Waziri is a children's literature, which concurs with the above statement. Much is taught **for** children in the book. The folly of wickedness, and that greediness and obstinacy are not virtues (Akanwa, 2002).
- **Guide to career path:** library information resources can be a good source of guidance to children as to the profession to choose, or what hobbies to engage in. Libraries can also expose children to research after reading about other children.
- **Vocabulary Building and Expression:** book introduces children to words. Words are the chief tools of communication between civilized people. The more words a child gets to know, the easier it becomes for him to understand what others tell him and expresses himself both in speech and in writing.

Access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Libraries provide access to Information and Communication Technology through which children gain and enhance their skills. The use of ICT infrastructure such as educational games will enhance their learning activities. Van and Boss (2002) identified many ways in which ICT can enrich children's literacy development, in the four interrelated areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. For example, "talking" word processors support young children's experimentation as they play with language. Information and Communication Technology offers an unravel opportunities in supporting the physically challenged children in our educational system to aid their learning (Bray, Brown and Green ,2004).

Lending Services

Libraries also lend out information resources to children in order to abate watching cartoons and playing at home. Their visit to the library during library hours in school, and loaning out information resources for them to use at home is **accurate** way of cultivating the habit of reading to children at a very tender age in Nigeria. This will also go a long way to encourage the less privileged children whose parents cannot afford the cost of textbook towards the realization of SDGs.

Reference Services

Reference service is a personal service offered to a library user. It aims at providing answers to his reference questions. This service should be encouraged in the

children's library because children are inquisitive. The children librarian is charged with the onus to entertain and answer all sorts of questions for her readers. She should not answer these questions only orally, but through the use of reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedia, and drawings.

Library Orientation

There is no way for a child to enjoy the library without being formally introduced to its resources. Libraries provide orientation courses to intimate children with what the library can offer, and how to make use of the library.

CHALLENGES FACING LIBRARY SERVICES AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SDGS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION (ECCE)

The following are some of the factors that militate against libraries in promoting effective Early Childhood Care Education in SDGs. These include:

1. **Inadequate existence of libraries in schools:** poor existence of libraries in most of the Nigerian nursery and primary schools is a serious challenge. Libraries are rarely found in Nigerian nursery or primary schools. Most schools are established without a library and there is no plan for the future. Many children pass through nursery and primary schools without the experience of actually using a library.
2. **Funding:** inadequate funding has been identified as one of the limitations of the education sector, resulting in problems such as a fall in the standard of education, breakdown and deterioration of facilities, shortage of new books and current journals in the library, etc... It has also affected the quality of both manpower and teaching. This adversely affects the attainment of goal 4 of the SDGs, with emphasis on Early Childhood Care Education.
3. **Lack of awareness among parents:** lack of awareness of the value and role of libraries by parents, (omit) has extremely contributed in poor reading culture among children. Further, Smith (2006) notes that African adults seldom read to their children including parents.
4. **Foreign Literature:** most of the literatures in libraries in the Nigerian schools are written by foreign authors with obvious foreign background. Nevertheless, these books are good but indigenous books with local background would adequately address our local needs in education for our young children in order to attain goal 4 in the SDGs.
5. **Lack of Trained Librarians:** School libraries lack adequate trained personnel (Librarians) who would select, acquire, organize and disseminate these information materials to children. Lack of trained and experienced librarians in the children's library is affecting the development of children's literature in the country and Early Childhood Care Education. This is

not good for Sustainable Development Goals particularly, goal number 4.

6. **Poor electricity supply:** the current trend in the supply of electricity in Nigeria is disheartening. Constant power outage does not encourage good use of ICTs media in the children's library. However, children are not adequately exposed to exploit these resources in their early education and development.

CONCLUSION

Libraries services are crucial factor in the education and development of children. These services provide the right platform for Early Childhood Care Education. Children are leaders of tomorrow, therefore libraries in Nigeria particularly schools and public libraries are entrusted with the responsibility of providing services channeled to adequate and effective civic, economic, cultural, social, political and psychological development of the Nigerian Child. Nigeria as a nation is required to be prudent in using its existing resources in a concerted effort to bridge knowledge and opportunity gaps and give all children a strong start for learning. Therefore, support for library services for Early Childhood Care Education is essential for Sustainable Development Goals for the young Nigerian children.

RECOMMENDATION

This paper suggests the following issues:

Adequate existence of libraries in schools and public libraries in rural and urban areas are required. This development will ensure active participation of children in the exploitation of available information resources that will enhance early education and reading culture of the children in the Nigerian nursery and primary schools.

Poor funding is a challenge to library services, therefore, enough fund should be injected into the development of schools and public libraries. Furthermore, adequate funding will improve the services rendered by libraries for children in their quest for education in early life and quality education sustained as clearly spelt out in SDGs under Goal 4.

Information providers and other related information professionals are required to create a platform where the importance of library services to young children can be showcase. This could be achieved through orientations in electronic and print media. Display of handbills and other social media should be provided such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn to parents for adequate enlightenment on the benefits of library services to young children. This will contribute greatly to good reading culture among children and eradicate ignorance on the usefulness of library to Early Childhood Care Education among parents.

Indigenous authors should be encouraged by government to publish children's literatures that have Nigerian content in terms of history, culture, morale, social, and politics. This can be achieved through tax-free regime on all children's literature in Nigeria and prizes for best published Children's literature of the year. This will enhance healthy competition among children's literature writers or authors in Nigeria. This factor will tremendously increase the quality of children's literature in libraries, and encourage access to books by children which will assist libraries in providing good services that can achieve Early Childhood Care education for SDGs in Nigeria.

More trained librarians are needed to manage the Nigerian schools and public libraries. A professionally trained librarian will efficiently acquire, organize, retrieve and disseminate valuable information materials that can have an effective and adequate impact on education, social, psychological and cultural needs of the children in Early Childhood Care Education for virtual attainment of SDGs under Goal 4.

Constant electricity supply as well is very important for library services to young children. Constant power supply will enhance application of ICTs facilities and tools that could improve early development of learning by children through services provided by libraries. Most of these gadgets require constant electricity for adequate and effective function.

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