

POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LIBRARIANSHIP: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND INFORMATION MANAGERS IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is mainly concerned with reducing poverty, unemployment, promoting self-reliance and providing opportunity for individuals to contribute to the economic development of any nation through innovation and change. It is a venturesome spirit which predisposes a person to undertake new ventures or try new methods in producing goods and services. This study examines poverty reduction through entrepreneurship in librarianship: the role of librarians and information managers in Nigeria. Among the areas covered are concepts of poverty, concepts of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills and opportunities available for librarians and information managers in Nigeria; the role of librarians and information managers in entrepreneurship in librarianship for poverty reduction in Nigeria. The study concludes that among the various entrepreneurial opportunities available are digitization of library materials, electronic publishing, indexing and abstracting services, reprographic services, library networking, to mention but a few. Finally, the study recommends among others, that government at all levels and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should provide fund for librarians and information managers on any chosen entrepreneurial opportunity available after graduation from library and information science schools. This would go a long way in ensuring self-reliance, poverty reduction, reduced unemployment and equally provide opportunities for librarians and information managers to contribute to the economic development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Poverty reduction, entrepreneurship, librarianship, librarians, information managers.

Introduction

Despite the fact that Nigeria is blessed with both natural and human resources, people are still suffering from poverty. Poverty is the state of being without, often associated with need, hardship and lack of resources across a wide range of circumstance. It may be seen as a condition in which an individual or group is incapable of providing themselves with the necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, to mention but a few. Shaban (2001) in Uthman (2003) describes the situation thus in Nigeria, poverty stares us in the face right from our bedrooms to the kitchens and then to the streets, where on daily basis, we watch

helplessly poverty stricken Nigerians wandering about in search of means of survival.

However, government has adopted measures in seeing that poverty is reduced. Poverty reduction means channels or means enacted to relieve people from suffering of lack of basic needs. With the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Nigerian government put in place National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) as multi-sectoral reforms. NEEDS wishes to ensure that poverty become a history in Nigeria. One of the strategies employed is to be entrepreneur, which requires acquisition of

skills for self-employment and self-reliance. Skills refer to as expertness, practical ability, dexterity and tact. An entrepreneur is a person who sees opportunities where others cannot. He is a visionary, problem solver, creative genius, an innovator, wealth generator, an inventor, one who produces job for others (Egwu, 2011). From the foregoing, entrepreneurs can come from all professions as long as they possess any of the entrepreneurial characteristics. Librarians, archivists, information scientists, information managers, information officers, doctors, lawyers, politicians, to mention but a few, could exhibit entrepreneurial characteristics. Expectedly, the entrepreneurship education/training impacted to library and information science graduates in the Nigerian library and information science schools is to provide entrepreneurs in various areas of specialization in library and information science programmes, thus: indexers, cataloguers, classifiers, archivists, documentalists, system librarians, subject librarians, web masters, communication officers, information brokers and publishers among others.

Concepts of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is defined in different perspectives by different scholars depending on their background, origination and circumstances. The word "entrepreneurship" originated from the French word "entreprendre" meaning "to undertake". Entrepreneurship is the creation and running of one's own business. It involves using initiatives and bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour, and capital to provide a product or service for public consumption (Nwangwu, 2008). Entrepreneurship is the art and science of systematic application of ingenious methods, processes, strategies, and approaches to initiate, nurture, manage, administer, and sustain, an enterprise, an endeavour, or vocation especially through utilization of the senses and power of thought, curiosity,

cleverness, goal-orientation, innovation, initiation, adoption, imagination, change, transformation, diversification, creativeness, skillfulness, tactfulness, modification, paradigm - shift, ventures, risk taking and persuasion (Mohammed, 2011).

On the other hand, Egwu (2011) states that the concept of entrepreneurship is better understood by looking at its characteristics rather than agreed definition since there is none. Commenting on the scope of entrepreneurship, Kuratko (2004) reveals that entrepreneurship is more than mere creation of business. It is a process of vision, change and creation. It requires the application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solution. The essential ingredients of entrepreneurship include the willingness to take calculated risk in terms of time, equity or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources and fundamental skills of building solid business plan and the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion.

The concept of entrepreneurship is pervasive. It presupposes that all human endeavours require entrepreneurial skills and attributes if such endeavours needed to survive, succeed and advance. It is trite to say that one is said to be entrepreneurial if his/her creative ability and other competencies help in solving problem around his community or work place.

Concept of Poverty Reduction

Poverty may be seen as a condition in which an individual is incapable of providing him/herself with the necessities of life such as, food, shelter, clothing, to mention but a few. It is also the state of being without, often associated with need, hardship and lack of resources across a wide range of circumstances. Ariyo (2000) opines that poverty is a condition in which an income is insufficient to meet the subsistent needs of an individual, family or society. Oludotun (2001) observes that it is a state in which an

individual is unable to cater adequately for his/her basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), unable to meet his social and economic obligations, lack gainful employment skills, assets and self-esteem and has limited access to socio-economic infrastructure like education, health, portable water and sanitation. Njoku (2006) views poverty and its attendant social ills as a monster of the society. The question is how poverty level can be reducing through entrepreneurship in librarianship.

However, poverty reduction means measures adopted to relieve people from suffering or lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter etc. These could be achieved through different approaches introduced by the government. Not only is entrepreneurship another way by which poverty could be reduced, Librarians and information managers have major role to play in this direction.

Government Approaches to Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

Poverty reduction has been one of the major concerns of Nigerian government. USAID (2004) reports that 70% of Nigerian populace is living in poverty on less than a dollar a day. Consequently, Aderibigbe (2003) says causes of poverty in Nigeria include, among others, illiteracy, unemployment, ignorance, high inflation rate due to poor economic management and inadequate access to unemployment opportunities. Based on this, the Nigeria government enacted initiatives supposedly aimed at encouraging economic growth that could enhance poverty reduction. The programmes includes: Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP), Agricultural Development Bank (ADP) and National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND). Other efforts in financial institutions for the same purpose were Nigeria Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), Nigeria bank for Commerce

and Industry (NBCI), Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN), and Nigeria Agricultural Corporate and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB).

However, the majority of Nigerians do not feel the impact of these government programmes towards poverty reduction. Besides, with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) as well as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which give micro-credits and KEKE NAPEP to the poor, are part of the government approaches to poverty reduction.

The probing questions are:

- How many poor people have been reached with all these approaches?
- Do these approaches consider librarians and information managers for any of these programmes?

Therefore, since the mid 1980s, there have been various initiatives by successive governments and present government at all levels. Some of the entrepreneurial initiatives in Nigeria include: the introduction of Green Revolution by the Shagari's administration, National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAD), Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), YouWin, an initiative of president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, among others, were instituted to promote entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths and the populace. Mohammed (2011), Shola (2011), Anyawu and Onah-Ossai (2001), Eba and Richard (2007), and Egwu (2011), remark that these initiatives were essentially designed to promote entrepreneurial culture that builds confidence, positive attitude, pride in success, support and encouragement of new ideas, social responsibility, providing technological support, encouraging inter-firm linkages and promotion of research and development. Nigerian government never loses sight of the tripartite relationship between entrepreneurship, industrialization and economic growth.

Entrepreneurial Skills and Opportunities Available for Librarians and Information Managers in Nigeria

Many of the entrepreneurial skills needed to be successful in business and work places can be learnt through study and training. Entrepreneurship is being taught in the Universities in order to prepare graduates for entrepreneurial opportunities, thus enhancing the individual ability to act entrepreneurially. Entrepreneurial skills as managerial skills, accounting and financial skills, marketing skills, general business skills, technical skills, information communication technology skills, and information literacy skills, if well exploited by librarians and information managers, would help them to become successful entrepreneurs in their work places and business enterprises. Mohammed (2011) affirms that entrepreneurship stimulates and promotes effectiveness, efficiency, progress, and goal achievement using optimally the available scarce resources to succeed.

However, library and information science schools produce entrepreneurship opportunities for librarians and information managers in various areas of specialization in library and information science programmes, thus: indexer, cataloguer, classifiers, archivists, documentalists, system librarians, subject librarians, Web masters, Communication officers to mention but a few. Also, some of the library and information programmes contain aspects of entrepreneurship and innovation that tend to spawn entrepreneurs. For example, courses such as abstracting and indexing, cataloguing, publishing, networking, telecommunication, library application packages, information system design, media services, and communication studies are among other existing entrepreneurship opportunities for librarians and information managers in Nigeria.

Advances in information and communication technology have greatly hindered entrepreneurial opportunities for librarians and information managers in the

contemporary digital age. Expectedly, librarians and information managers can convert the skills acquired in entrepreneurial education in order to make meaningful progress in life in addition to adding value to the well-being of the citizenry.

The internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) could be very good sources of business opportunity. Through the internet, potential entrepreneurs, such as librarians and information managers, can identify unmet needs of customers because it would offer them a platform that would connect them to buyers and sellers and information seekers. The number of Nigerians earning their living as self-employed entrepreneurs nationwide is more likely to continue to increase due to the increase rate of unemployment, poverty, youth restiveness, crimes and disease, among other social problems. There is a growing unemployment among the educated because job openings have not kept pace with the number of new entrants into the labour market. For example, a recent report by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) as quoted by Ekere and Ekere (2012) indicates that over 200,000 Nigerian graduates who completed their National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in the past five years have remained unemployed. Library and information science graduates with profound entrepreneurial skills and competencies have greater opportunities and prospects of becoming successful entrepreneurs in the digital age. Largely, there are myriads of entrepreneurial ventures in Nigeria.

The Role of Librarians and Information Managers in Entrepreneurship in Librarianship for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

Librarians and information managers have major roles to play in seeing that poverty in Nigeria is drastically reduced. However, the importance of entrepreneurship has continued to be the major concern of Nigerian government. For example, many states in

Nigeria have taken proactive measures to empower the youths and graduates of tertiary institutions through the establishment of skills acquisition centres where youth have been trained in various trades such as, handset repairs, computer repairs, welding and fabricating, Auto-mechanic, carpentry, tailoring, to mention but a few. In most instances, graduates/trainees from such centres often given soft take-off loans to enable them establish and manage their own business. Entrepreneurship is receiving premium today, as it remains a topical issue of discussion in conferences, workshops and seminar organized by government at all levels, educational institutions, government agencies, professional bodies, donor agencies and non - governmental organizations. Irtwange (2008) believes that entrepreneurship offers employment, improves balance of payments, increases availability of goods, improves technological ability which improves the living standard of citizenry and economic development of the country.

The role of librarians and information managers in entrepreneurship in librarianship for poverty reduction is multifaceted. Entrepreneurship helps in developing ideal information workers who are capable of providing effective and efficient information services within and outside their workplaces. It helps librarians and information managers to use their talents and capabilities in information services provision to the consumers. Mohammed (2011) emphasizes that entrepreneurship should not be applied solely on and for economic purposes; rather, it should be applied for social purposes especially on the issue of social services by agencies such as library and information outfits that are prone to creativity, innovation entrepreneurship, risk taking, goal orientedness etc. Essentially, librarians and information managers to be resourceful, inspirational, strategic, creative, artistic, innovative, resilient, diplomatic and responsive to provide their clients with the

necessary information resources and services.

Contemporary librarians and information managers should be vested with the role of transformation and repackaging of library and information services. As social entrepreneurs, information professionals have the responsibility of educating and bringing information to the doorstep of researchers, students, readers, as well as entrepreneurs who are in search of information that will aid them in their pursuits. Entrepreneurship equips library and information workers with the strategies to enhance their information search, and how to make use of such tools in the present digital age (Eke, Igwesi & Orji, 2011). It is, therefore, the duty of information professionals to provide search-based sources both in print and non-print format to potential and prospective seekers.

Entrepreneurship has widened the professional activities of librarians and information managers in drastically reducing poverty. The activities as captured by Ikyembe (2011) include the following: finding, researching, retrieving, analyzing, evaluating and disseminating information, selecting, buying, cataloguing and indexing books, web design, providing support in the use of information resources, information services and IT systems providing inquiry services, designing and managing information technology systems and managing information services. Most of the activities in library and information work, according to Johnson, Clap, Ewing and Buhler (2011) require entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving ability, communication and collaboration, information literacy, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability and leadership. It is noteworthy to state that entrepreneurship helps library and information centre to have a comprehensive inventory of the resources and services to start information services, helps

evaluate the readiness of the library and information services, promotes networking among interested libraries which allows for progression, wide input; helps recast librarianship practice, helps library and information centres engaged in knowledge-based businesses form the basis for the design and evaluation of library services, promotes investment in tools for information and knowledge creation and help the information workers to create value for the resources that have been provided to their clientele.

Conclusion

Based on this study, it could be concluded that poverty is seen as a condition in which an individual is incapable of providing him/herself with the necessities of life, namely food, shelter, clothing, to mention but a few. It has been one of the major concerns of Nigerian government which had introduced different approaches for reducing poverty. Entrepreneurship is another measure adopted in seeing that poverty level in the country is drastically reduced. The entrepreneurship education/training imparted to librarians and information managers in Nigeria library and information science schools has produced them in various areas of specialization in library and information professions namely indexers, cataloguers, classifiers, Archivists, Documentalists, system librarians, subject librarians, web masters, communication officers, information brokers, and publishers to mention but a few.

However, the role of librarians and information managers in entrepreneurship in librarianship for poverty reduction is multifaceted. Entrepreneurship in librarianship helps in developing ideal information workers who are capable of providing effective and efficient information services within and outside their workplaces. It helps librarians and information managers to use their talents and capability in information service provision to the customers.

Recommendations

Based on this study and conclusion, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Government at all levels and non – governmental organizations (NGOs) should provides funds for librarians and information managers in any chosen entrepreneurial opportunity available or specialization after graduation from library and information science schools. It would go a long way in ensuring that self-reliance, poverty reduction as well as reducing unemployment levels among librarians and information managers become a reality.
2. Periodic seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for library and information science graduates by library and information science school, Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA), National Association of Library and Information Science Education (NALISE) in order to keep them abreast of current trends in entrepreneurship in librarianship.
3. Librarians and information managers should translate the available opportunities into wealth creation and social service provision enterprises.
4. Librarians and information managers should diversity their interests and passion for entrepreneurial opportunities within and outside their professions.

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