

COUNSELLING
— AND —
CONTEMPORARY
— SOCIAL ISSUES IN —
MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS

A BOOK IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR S. O. SALAMI

Edited by:

D. A. Adeyemo, Ph.D

D. A. Oluwole, Ph.D

A. O. Busari, Ph.D

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**Counselling and Contemporary Social Issues in
Multicultural Settings: A Book in Honour of
Professor S.O. Salami**

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CHAPTER 17

KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AS PANACEA TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Knowledge is a pre-requisite to any significant level of infrastructure development. The paper emphasized knowledge infrastructure development as panacea to quality assurance in higher education in Nigeria. From preliminary observation, there may not be meaningful, creative and deepened use of technology for teaching, learning and research activities in higher institutions without the availability and adequacy of knowledge infrastructure. The methodology adopted for this paper was literature-based approach. The literature consulted covered the period of 1995 to 2017. The materials consulted for the literature survey include scholarly journals, textbooks, conference proceedings, and Internet sources. Contextual information from the information materials were studied comparatively, discussed and inferences were drawn from the literature. The concept of knowledge infrastructure has been discussed in the paper to reflect new knowledge practices captured under the language of crowd sourcing, cyber-

infrastructure, personal informatics, citizen science, open access, among others. The paper further discussed the process of knowledge infrastructure which centred on knowledge accumulation, integration, and reconfiguration. In addition, knowledge infrastructure as panacea to quality assurance in higher education reflects quality use of information by access control. The paper concludes that investment in knowledge infrastructure would make African countries to compete with the rest of the global world in terms of infrastructural development. The recommendations therefore include provision of relevant ICT tools to aid library services; improvement of library personnel ICT skills; and readiness to use knowledge infrastructure by library users.

Keywords: Access control, cyber-infrastructure, information resources, intellectual property, libraries, open access,

Introduction

Librarianship as a profession is moving from a mere helping users to find material such as books, journals and other information resources that could aid research projects. According to Borgman (2012), the role of libraries in academic and research institutions “is evolving from a focus on reader services to a focus on author services (an insight first voiced by Kimberly Douglas of Caltech)”. If there is need to ask what a library does from library users, many will say, “It provides access to books.” Looking toward the future, if libraries are to succeed, they will need to increase investment in services that extend beyond such user assumptions (Tex-Library, 2017).

Libraries should invest in virtual spaces that complement existing technology, unique collections, and content expertise, and library space as a concept will need to be redefined to accommodate work in new arenas. These among others are knowledge infrastructures needed in libraries to enhance quality education in higher institutions especially in Nigeria. Availability and adequacy of knowledge infrastructure could contribute to both creative and deepened use of technology for teaching, learning and research

activities in higher institutions. This paper therefore discussed the issue of library infrastructure development as panacea to quality assurance in higher education in Nigeria.

The Concept of Knowledge Infrastructure

Enormous transformations have occurred over the last 20 years in the systems for generating, sharing, and disputing human knowledge. Changes associated with Internet technologies such as social media, “big data,” open source software, ubiquitous computing, and Wikipedia have altered the basic mechanics by which knowledge is produced and circulated. Edwards (2010) defined knowledge infrastructures as “robust networks of people, artifacts, and institutions that generate, share, and maintain specific knowledge about the human and natural worlds.”

Infrastructures are ecologies or complex adaptive systems; they consist of numerous systems, each with unique origins and goals, which are made to interoperate by means of standards, socket layers, social practices, norms, and individual behaviours that smooth out the connections among them. This adaptive process is continuous, as individual elements change and new ones are introduced and it is not necessarily always successful. The current situation for knowledge infrastructures is characterized by rapid change in existing systems and introduction of new ones, resulting in severe strains on those elements with the greatest inertia (Borgman, 2012).

Information products in the networked environment of digital science, or eScience are readily mobile and capable of transfer across vast physical distances. In shifting to a digital medium, eScience now utilizes a data-centric set of methods requiring an infrastructure capable of sustaining long-distance collaborations and high volumes of data (Atkins et al. 2003). Hence, infrastructure is most easily recognized as a physical manifestation or a technical standard such as railroads, telephone wires, paved roads, textual protocols, and networked technologies.

A new form of infrastructure was needed to support digital scholarship and could be referred to as cyber-infrastructure. According to Atkins (2003), “cyber-infrastructure refers to

infrastructure based upon distributed computer, information, and communication technology. If infrastructure is required for an industrial economy, then we could say that cyber-infrastructure is required for a knowledge economy. Perhaps, this is why Edwards (2010) noted that infrastructure is particularly laborious to discuss because of its dependence on technical standards that contribute to much larger, patch-work like structures.

Remarkable new knowledge practices have emerged, captured under the language of crowdsourcing, cyber-infrastructure, personal informatics, citizen science, open access, MOOCs, and dozens of other terms that wouldn't have shown up in the Wikipedia pages of a decade ago. Hence, academic studies of some of these phenomena have become virtual scholarly fields unto themselves. Knowledge institutions like universities, libraries, and government agencies (and increasingly private entities like Facebook, Google, and Twitter) have begun to adjust, opening up vast stores of anonymized data to analysis and exploitation, engaging users and publics in new ways, and in some cases rethinking logics and practices that have been decades if not centuries in the making (Beagrie, 2006).

Knowledge infrastructural elements include entities at an individual level and institutional level that are networked for both practical and theoretical collaboration. In other words, knowledge infrastructure allows for a more accurate framing of curatorial activities that enhance existing information transfer activities, and recognizes that knowledge can be both shared and maintained through varieties of technological networks. Edwards (2010) notes further that, "knowledge infrastructure is not a new concept in science, it is often discussed in terms of 'technoscience' to capture the technological dimension of science as knowledge practice." Knowledge infrastructure also accounts for the preservation and persistence of information that is necessary for eScience to sustainably grow.

The Process of Knowledge Infrastructure development in Libraries

Knowledge management processes are highly essential for effective knowledge infrastructure development in libraries. Various authors

have perceived knowledge infrastructure development processes in varying ways. According to Gold, Malhotra & Segars (2001), information technology (IT), organizational structure, and organizational culture are considered as infrastructure capabilities, while knowledge and acquisition, conversion, application, and protection are known as process capabilities. Lee and Kim (2001) identified that there are three knowledge development processes including knowledge accumulation, integration, and reconfiguration. Knowledge accumulation can be done by acquiring knowledge from various external and internal sources. On the other hand, the most significant knowledge infrastructure development processes are integrating and reconfiguring of knowledge, because environment keeps on changing (Shabbir & Anwar, 2015).

Wiig (1995) explained that knowledge processes consist of four stages, i.e., creation, manifestation, use, and transfer of knowledge. Creation and manifestation means how knowledge is created and established in the minds of the people in addition to the culture, procedures, and technology. Use of knowledge is about how it is used in making decisions and other knowledge-related work by individuals and businesses. Transfer means how people learn and exchange the knowledge with others. Knowledge infrastructure development cannot be implemented without suitable IT tools, because IT is an important tool for knowledge management. Research findings reveal that IT is a critical success factor for implementing knowledge management in an organization (Mobashar, Ahmad Kamil, Savita, & Aamir, 2010).

A well-developed technological knowledge infrastructure can increase communication within libraries, parent institutions and information users by removing difference obstacles of communication between various parties involved. It leads to the wide distribution of knowledge in organisations (Holsapple, 2006). Alavi (2006) is of the view that technology is the basic factor in creating and distributing knowledge. Through the use of technological infrastructure, it is possible to ease access to knowledge, creating a backup for knowledge reservoirs, thereby facilitating the knowledge system. IT plays a key role in knowledge creation activities as it acts as a knowledge creation tool in a

scientific environment which enhances interaction in organisations individually and collectively (Tian, Nakamori, & Wierzbicki, 2009; Shabbir & Anwar, 2015).

Knowledge Infrastructure and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality education depends on what is available in the institution that provides the education, in term of professors, lecturers, student, administrators, and information infrastructure available in the institution library. Quality management in higher education sector consists of quality assurance, quality control and quality improvements. The term quality management has been using by higher education institutes towards overall development of education system. Therefore, leading students into virtual environments to create research products, utilizing classrooms designed with multiple screens for active small group work, and helping students manage work with the use of project management tools all present opportunities for rich collaborative teaching partnerships between librarians and lecturers (Aufderheide, 2011).

Access to information resources is granted with the expectation that resources will be used in an ethical and lawful manner in a knowledge infrastructure era. Information users in higher institutions of learning are therefore responsible for using resources appropriately to maintain the integrity of the electronic information resources, and where appropriate, the privacy, confidentiality, and/or security of the electronic information. In addition, individuals should not give out, loan, share, or otherwise allow anyone else to use the access privileges granted to them. Access to secured information resources is provided only with proper authorization (Byrne, 2005).

Information users in higher institution of learning are expected to respect the rights of copyright owners and, when appropriate, obtain permission from owners before using or copying protected material, including but not limited to, music, movies, software, documents, images, or multimedia objects (Byrne, 2005). Institution licenses most databases, electronic journals, and other forms of information

content under contracts that define who may use the content and what may be done with it. In general, only library registered students, lecturers, and staff may use these resources; unaffiliated users may use these resources within library buildings. Systematic or excessive downloading or printing of content is not permitted, including downloading or printing of whole journal issues (Geffert, 2011).

New computer technologies for gathering, storing, manipulating, and communicating knowledge are revolutionizing the use and spread of information. Along the way, they are also creating ethical dilemmas. The speed and efficiency of electronic information systems, which include local and global networks, databases, and programs for processing information, force people to confront entirely new rights and responsibilities in their use of information and to reconsider standards of conduct shaped before the advent of computers (Aufderheide, 2011).

Conclusion

Libraries are in no doubt vehicles of information for fixing infrastructure in order to ensure for meaningful development in every society. Presently, librarianship has grown beyond paper and shelves globally. As a way of providing relevant and adequate information for infrastructural development, libraries across the world have embraced the use of information and communication technologies. If African countries are to compete with the rest of the global world in terms of infrastructural development, there is obviously the need to invest in knowledge infrastructure and harness the opportunities brought by libraries. Knowledge infrastructure in libraries ensure for quality assurance especially in higher level of education by ensuring that access to information resources is by proper authorisation. This again go a long way in fixing the problem of plagiarism.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Knowledge infrastructure development cannot be implemented without suitable IT tools. Therefore, Governments and authorities in charge of the management

of libraries in higher institutions of learning should provide relevant and adequate ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools in order to aid the services provision by library personnel.

2. Library personnel should maximize every available opportunity in order to improve their ICT skills so as to be able to function very well in the present information age. This could be achieved by regular attendance at conferences, workshops, seminars and other relevant capacity building trainings.
3. Users of libraries in higher institutions of learning should be ready to make use of the knowledge infrastructures in the libraries in order to encourage the libraries to make continuous improvement of their knowledge infrastructure. This is because, it could be very painful to spend huge amount of money making infrastructure available and not to have users for such.

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