THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL DEVELOPEMENT

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Abstract: *A library service is an integral part of a country's general progress. It is one of the most efficient means of acquiring, organizing and making available on democratic basis informational and educational materials. There was no argument that libraries really play big roles towards national education and national development. The libraries are the main institution that provides information to education either for students or layman. The jobs created by the libraries also have improving a national economic. National development is directly and indirectly affected by the libraries functions. A knowledge society is one of the great contributions by the libraries that help national development keep growing and continually serve the people the best as they could.*

Keywords: *Libraries, Socio-economic, National Development, occupation*

INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)/UNESCO guidelines for library service states that: "the primary purposes of the library are to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure (International Federation of Library Associations, 2011). They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions."

Information is power and power belongs to the people. Information is the engine that drives people to better understanding that eventually leads to sound judgments and decision making. It is a fact that National library Service plays an important role in democracy promotion and social economic development in a country.

Support for libraries is a case in point. The theme of modern librarianship, universally faced with limited resources, is to avoid duplication of materials, resources and manpower, and to

ensure the most efficient and cost-effective means of meeting user needs and demands. Librarians have the skills to build collections of information where no such collection exists, to pull disparate data together so that new information is formed, to organize it so that it is useful and usable, to add to its richness and delete the obsolete, and to provide access to information wherever it is located. Librarians around the world are developing the means to transfer information in a variety of ways, to apply technological management to its use, and to serve as the human mediator between a vast array of information resources and the needs of individual users and groups of users. These are the skills inherent in the practice of librarianship that can be exploited as invaluable assets in an unstable economic environment.

DEFINITION

Socioeconomic factors are the social and economic experiences and realities that help mold one's personality, attitudes, and lifestyle (Socio-economic factors, 2011). The factors can also define regions and neighbourhoods. Law-enforcement agencies throughout the country, for example, often cite the socioeconomic factor of poverty as being related to areas with high crime rates.

Among socioeconomic factors is education. One's level of education can shape how he or she views the world and can contribute to social growth. It can lead to increased earning capacity, which in turn can contribute to quality-of-life issues. Education also can contribute to decision-making processes that alter the paths people take in life.

One's income and corresponding occupation are factors that can contribute to socioeconomic status. Career in medicine, for example, places a person in a higher income bracket, while also making that same person part of a social class of doctors, nurses and other medical-profession peers. In society, we often are judged by what we do and what we earn. When getting to know someone, the question of what we do for a living often is among the first addressed.

From the type of house we live in to the region and neighbourhood in which we reside, place of residence is another leading socioeconomic factor. For better or worse, neighbourhoods often group us socially among people with similar incomes and often similar backgrounds.

For instance, at points in history, entire neighbourhoods have been established around factories or mills for purposes of housing employees. The city of Gary, Indiana, for example, rose to prosperity around the steel mills on the shores of Lake Michigan. And when the steel industry began to take a turn for the worse in the late 1970s and early '80s, the neighbourhood structures of Gary began to crumble, and poverty and crime set in.

Culture and ethnicity also are socioeconomic factors that can contribute to our thoughts and attitudes. Both can have an impact on how people are raised, their core values, and their sense of family and tradition. The history of one's ethnicity, special holidays, and cultural beliefs are all things that can be passed down between generations and shape individual identities. Often closely tied to culture is the socioeconomic factor of religion. Whole social networks are built around churches, temples and mosques. From church barbecues and softball games to overseas missionaries and outreach groups, religion plays an important social role in the lives of many. "Development" is gradual growth toward advancement and power (Zahedi Mazandarani, 2003). Development has economical, political, social and cultural aspects. Rapid expansion of knowledge and technology creates complexities in determining which factors have an effect on development. Considering factors such as culture, economy, hygiene, education, etc., leads to a broad but unified concept of development (Bahramzadeh, 2003). Taken as a whole, development is all actions that lead society toward an organized system of individual and collective living conditions relating to desirable values (Sharif al Nasabi, 1996).

Several reasons have been identified which dictate that National Library Service should diversify its operations to include rural communities.

These include the following:

a. Rural communities constitute the majority of the country's population and they have a right to be served and the National Library Service has a mandate to carter for their needs as much as they do for the literate minority.

b. Rural communities play very important role in national economic development. Government programme embrace the concept of "national development through rural development" National Library Service associates itself with rural development

activities through its information role. There are other information agencies already operating in rural areas and the National Library Service recognizes these and determines its own function accordingly.

c. Rural communities require and can make use of suitable library services when made available. Developing services to rural areas widens the library's user community and help create a truly National Library Service.

d. Availability of suitable reading materials is necessary for the maintenance of literacy among people. Literacy is crucial for the country's development, as it is for the survival of the conventional library services themselves. As a National Library Service, they recognize that literacy is the key to bringing informed life so they actively support literacy activities in the schools and communities. Basically libraries role is to bridge the literacy gap.

Resources and institutions are two important influences on national development. Potential and actual resources are the determining factors for achieving goals. Developing countries need quick access to resources, including natural resources, advanced technology, and managers and skilled workers who are motivated ("Human Resource Development," 2002).

Human resources are particularly crucial for this effort. There is a direct connection between the quality of human resources and the structural evolution of countries. A technical and modern curriculum is important for LIS. This kind of education should be supported by higher education and programming administration.

Curricula should include skills related to designing, consulting, and improving information systems. Librarians should be qualified to make decisions on operational, executive, and technological topics, and on organizing and managing libraries and archives.

ROLES OF LIBRARIES TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are many questions yet to be addressed about the role that libraries can play in the socio-economic changes underway (S., 1990). For example, what is the role to be played by the national library in providing information to support economic development? What relationships need to be developed between types of libraries, and how can they work together most effectively? What are some other applications for the model proposed (e.g., the concept of an agricultural extension service and the notion of the farmer as a small businessman)? What effect does economic restructuring have on library schools and their curriculum? What kind of training can be provided to practising librarians to update their skills and where can support be found to support such training? What kinds of information gathering devices need to be put into place to allow public libraries to collect non-traditional kinds of information? What is the role of government in providing such information to libraries? How can librarians make them more visible in the economic arena and project the image of the library as a vital institution that can serve new kind of clients? What kinds of processes can be put into place to assess the information needs of various communities for new kinds of services?

The libraries have a big responsibility towards improving a quality of education in the country and which automatically contribute to national development (Dayani, 2005). Education will be easier for the people with help from the library. The most critical role of the libraries is to provide reference material for the use of local community. In this case, public libraries and national libraries would play their roles to make sure this responsibility being carried out properly.

Another important role of libraries towards education is providing information to researcher especially a research which connected with national development (Hayati, 2008). The libraries can contribute by provide a service of finding information, evaluate the information for the researcher, and make a cross reference of reference analysis for researcher. Libraries are one of the most trusted institutions that provide information to the public. For that, the accuracy of the research is unquestionable and the source of the information reliable.

Lastly, the libraries are responsible to provide a good facility and equip their building with latest technology available in the market. A good facility can be defined as a facility that being provided is in good condition, safe to use by the libraries user, and easy to use. For the equipment, libraries must provides a computer or others gadget which empowered by latest

technology that can speed up the learning process in the library. By providing all of these, the libraries can contribute a lot to a national education which will make an education easier for people.

The libraries also play a big role in income and occupation of the people in the country (Momeni, 2006). Many jobs created when the libraries operates likes librarian, librarian assistant, and maintenance workers. Same situation also happen in vendor sides which many types of job being created. Indirectly, the national economic will improve a lot and an index of income per capita will increase.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges for libraries to play their roles towards education and national development is the failure of literacy campaigns in many developing countries in the decade 1960/70 despite the large number of international experts involved was that the organizers did not provide for the continuing education after the programmes ceased. "They taught the people to read, left them, and the obvious happened-the people reverted into illiteracy". The problem of maintaining literacy in the rural areas affects not only adult new literates but even young people dropping out of or leaving primary schools 'prematurely'.

For undeveloped country especially in third world country, their major problem is lack of expert in information field and for this case, librarian. In 2010, there was less than ten librarians working in Somalia which the number is totally different compared to Malaysia (Sharif al Nasabi, 1996). Even there was a contribution like books and other reading material come from other country, because of lack of the expert, those materials is not fully utilized by local people.

Local people awareness also one of the problems faced by the libraries to contribute to national education and development. For some undeveloped country, even though all the equipments and materials of the libraries have been provided, a local people are not interested to use them. The awareness of learning is still in not satisfactory level. Consequently, the cost of operation spent to operate the libraries is not productive as the return of investment is near to zero.

Lastly, there is no question that libraries are expensive. They must be fed and nurtured; they must be weeded of the obsolete and the useless. They must be constantly updated as times and conditions and social values change. In order to be cost effective, they must co-operate with each other so that each will have potential beyond its own resources. They must avoid the duplication of materials, resources and manpower and develop the most efficient and cost effective means of meeting the increasing insistence of user needs and demands. The librarian of the future must be versed not only in classification theory but must understand the value, potential and limitations of information technology. The most crucial challenges faced by the libraries to play their roles are budget (Hayati Z. , 2008). Commonly, the libraries only get a small amount of money annually to be used throughout the year. Because of budget constraint, the libraries planning also become limited. The cost of paying a library staff already fifty percent of the annual budget and the rest of the budget are used to buy materials, equipments and for activities.

SUGGESTIONS

Some conclusions are suggested to encounter a challenges faced by the libraries to play their roles. Firstly, the library's budget annually should be increased adequately. So the libraries can easily carried out the planning they have made without consent about budget. The activities done by the libraries will attract more library user to come to the library more frequently.

Another way to make sure the libraries can continually contribute to national education and development is by held a campaign. There are many types of campaign can be held such as campaign go to the libraries. The campaign also should attract people of all ages from children to senior citizens. If the campaign is successful, the libraries will get an increasing of its user afterward especially children. The knowledge gain from the libraries will directly contribute to the national education and development.

The libraries staffs also have a responsible to make sure the libraries contribute to both national education and development. For that, they have to provide good services to their customer. When the users satisfied with the services they got during in the libraries, the possibilities for them to return to libraries is high.

For the libraries located at undeveloped country, they need to conduct information literacy to their local community. By doing that, people in the community will appreciate the knowledge and know how to get the information by them in the future. To enhance the information literacy program, the libraries have to follow a standard of information literacy program that already successful in other country such as in United States.

If the role and the potential of libraries are undervalued in an economically developing country, if the training and retraining of practitioners is not supported, if the concept of the library as a community information resource is not recognized and demanded by the community of small businesses, if the specialized knowledge of the business librarian does not become a visible resource to the business community, then a potential asset in economic growth will not be realized.

CONCLUSION

Information has impact beyond itself. At this point in time, it is impossible to assess the impact of the massive influx of information on the changing societies in the world. Because of that, the libraries can be a main factor of the socio-economic status for the country. A good standard of education can make a socio-economic of the country better. The libraries also generate a number of jobs which directly enhance country economic. National development ratio also increased if the libraries are fully functional as what they suppose to. Many researches can be done which automatically to develop country with the help of the libraries.

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