USE OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA IN RURAL INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY: LIBRARIANS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper discusses the use of traditional communication media in rural information service delivery looking at librarians' perspective. It reviewed the explanation of traditional communication media, being seen as the tools used in the dissemination of information in rural areas. It also discusses some of the traditional communication media, concept of rural information service delivery and use of traditional communication media- librarians' perspective. Traditional communication media is one of the tools used to disseminate information in rural areas and librarians can make use of them for effective information service delivery. On the other hand, rural information services is usually a message that is communicated by a communicator to a receiver in rural areas for the development of the rural people both socially, economically, politically and otherwise. The traditional communication media that can be used in rural areas include gong, drums, drama presentation, songs, town criers, talking drum, folk tales, folk dances, proverbs, riddles, etc. These traditional communication media can be used by information centres, which include libraries, because they tend to win the confidence of rural masses and appeal to emotions of the rural people. The paper concludes that communication in a simplest form can be defined as an act or process of using words, sounds, signs, behaviour to express or exchange information or to express ideas, thought, feelings, etc, to someone else. Traditional communication media involves the use of basic local resources, such as poems, storytelling, singing, dancing and games to convey realistic messages that citizens can relate to.

Keywords: Traditional communication, Traditional communication media, Library, Information centres, Information services, Library services

INTRODUCTION

Communication can be said to be a variety of behaviours, processes and tools by which meaning is conveyed or derived from information. It is at the core of our humanness and how we communicate with each other shapes our lives and our world. Communication is regarded as the life blood of human existence which rapidly enhances unity that le als t othe development of our society at large. Communication is a basic human need and everybody needs to communicate and be communicated with (K alu, 2011).

One of such me hod of communication in rural community is the tradtional communication media which encompasses the use of town criers, talking drums, wooden gongs, drama presentation, folk tales, etc to disseminate information to the people more especially rural people. Most commonly used media of communication in olden days era were town criers, talking drum, wooden gongs and several ofter tradtional means of information communication in rural area (Ogbonda and Siddens, 1999). Traditional communication media is seen as various communication tools or media used in the rurlaareas to convey information or pass messages from person to person or to the entire community. Frank and Gohla (1998) itemize the tradtional communication media to include myths, storytelling, songs, proverbs, religious rituals, artistic, musical dance and theatrical elements, as well as ornaments depicting on pottery, textiles and wood. They state that traditional communication media exist in all races of the world.

Librarians as purveyors of information can equally make use of these traditional communication media in information service delivery in rural areas. There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed in rural community ranging from government policies, health information system, politics, youth enlistment, etc. It is therefore, necessary for librarians in rural areas make adequate use of these media for information awareness and dissemination. This paper therefore examines the use of traditional communication media in rural information service delivery, narrowing down its discussion on some tradtional modes of communication that are being used in rural areas for information rural service delivery.

LITERATUREREVIEWED

This paper was reviewed under various sub-heading, which are the explanation of traditional communication media, including some of the traditional communication media being used in rural areas. It also lo ded into the conceptual overview of rural information service delivery and the use of tradtional communication media in rural information service delivery.

Traditional Communication Media Explained

Traditional communication media involve using basic local resources, such as poems, storytelling, singing, dancing and games to convey realistic messages that citizens can relate to. It serves the purpose of delivering a concise and effective message to a small group of people usually those people who live in towns and small communities. These media of communication are

generally more simplistic and basic than alternative modern form of communication (Reference.com, 2022). They can be seen as vehicles which are rich in variety, and are readily and economically viable. They win the confidence of rural masses as they communicate a face-to-face situation between the communicator and the receiver of the message. They are tools or channels use in conveying information to the people in rural communities. It is this kind of traditional communication media that serves the primary purpose of relating to individuals through emotional appeals by basing events on situations encountered in the daily lives of people living in the vicinity. They convey simple message and beliefs to people on a basis level, usually one that requires little, if any, formal education to understand (Kalu, 2011).

Majmudari (2000) stated that these traditional communication media have the capacity to change and adopt the socio-political situation in the rural community. According to him, message is fully realized when it passes through the attitude and behavioural pattern of the people in song, dancing, traditional wrestling, folk tales etc. It is unanimously recognized that communication is an essential element of each epoch and every society. They are for instance myths; story-telling; songs; proverbs; religious rituals; artistic, musical, dance and theatrical elements, as well as ornaments depicted on pottery, textiles and wood.

Some Traditional Communication Media

Traditional communication media, therefore, involve different forms of communication which include folk tale, town criers, songs, village meetings, etc. All these are different ways or means through which communities interact, associate, communicate, relate and share ideas, views, opinion, information, norms and values within them. Some of the traditional communication media in use in rural information service delivery are the following; gong, town crier, folk dances, talking drum, drama presentation, folk tales, etc.

A gong is a traditional tool for communication that takes the form of a flat, circular metal disc which is hit with a mallet or stick. The gong traces its roots back to the Bronze Age around 3500 BC. Gongs are made mainly from bronze or brass but there are many other alloys in use. Gongs produce two distinct types of sound (Wikipedia.org, 2022). It is used for a number of purposes. It is sometimes used to get the attention of listeners prior to the dissemination of verbal messages to members of a community. It can be further used to reinforce important parts of a verbal message.

Town Criers are another mode of information dissemination in rural environment. They were regarded as traditional messengers who moved from place to place delivering messages by beating drums or ringing of bell to attract the attention of the villagers. Town criers are referred to as traditional media. He announces important meetings, ceremonies, messages and imminent troubles. Ugboajah and Siddons (1999) see the town criers as "a significant village "broadcaster' who summons the elders for decision and policy making for the progress of the society. They relay their decisions to the village masses for implementation.

Folk dances are dances that are developed by people that reflect the life of the people of a certain community. Songs of course abound independently of festivals, but they are more spontaneous and more concentrated during festivals. It is however, the popular and occasional songs that are used by generality of the people to express their opinion or vent their feelings about things happening around them. Stichele (2010) posits that the creation of songs is dependent on what is going on around the life of the composer. Sometimes, it is his/her experiences or observations that provide the feeders for compositions and such compositions are meant to warn, entertain or simply to inform.

Talking drum is another traditional mode of communication which helps in developing the rural communities. The talking drum is an extension of oral tradition. It is regarded as the "Ekwe Ikoro" in the Igbo communities; it reproduces the tonal pattern of a sentence in the proper sequence and can be heard over a very long distance. They are used to call meetings, for making some official announcements, at sacrificial ceremonies and also for pumping the Adrenaline during wars. They provide gaiety during festivities and ceremonies like new-Yam festivals, weddings, and chieftaincy title taking; they also provide the atmosphere of suspense and tension during war and wresting mat thes.

Drama presentation involves live performance before a sitting audience or watching audience. In the presentation of oral tradition (drama), every part of the body is involved as they are used to demonstrate the issues involved in the presentation (Onwubiko, 2006).

Folk tales are oral narrative which has a free form of text. They are to some extent meant to convey important aims like instructing or explaining the world, edifying or vindicating right. Folktales and story-telling are used both as forms of entertainment, education and socialization of young people. It was a common scene in the not-too-distant past in many rural areas to see children gather round some elders in the evening, especially in moon-lit nights, listening to traditional stories. Apart from the immense enjoyment children derive from the stories, they also get to know unconsciously about what their societies consider good or bad behaviour, the taboos and sanctions against them and the general belief system. Proverbs are short, usually fixed, phrases that encapsulate some bit of wisdom to be passed on at appropriate moments.

Rural Information Service Delivery

Information could be seen as a raw material in the development of rural communities. Prosperity, progress and development of any rural communities depend upon its ability to acquire, produce, access and use pertinent information. According to Harande (2009), a recent research on older rural dwellers indicated that accessibility of information and advice is a major resource for rural dwellers in maintaining active and independent lives. Accessibility of information by rural dwellers is also critical in the sense that it lets rural people to know their entitlement to welfare benefits and sources of support to overcome social exclusion.

The term "rural" could be regarded as any place that lacks basic social amenities like schools, good roads, power supply, health facilities, portable drinking water etc. According to Iwe (2003), the rural area in the Nigerian context is any area that is far from the urban city, a village, a hinterland with no good access roads, no pipe-borne water, no electricity, and no factories and industries while Ezekiel and Saleh (2014) is of the opinion that in Nigeria, the rural environment is characterized by highly illiterate, petty traders, as well as subsistence farmers.

Rural Information is usually a message that is communicated by a communicator to a receiver in rural areas for the development of the rural people both socially, economically, politically and otherwise. Rural information could be defined as information or data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to rural people and is of real or perceived value in current or future decision. Lack of relevant and adequate rural information has impacted negatively on any development process in rural areas (Harande, 2009).

In the concept of rural information, there is what is called Rural Information Center, this rural information center is basically an information center that is provided for the survival and growth of the rural community. It is meant to cater for the rural dwellers who are usually occupational farmers as information required by such members of the community is usually expended on the available resources around them. The information service through which the rural information centers are provided to communities is called Rural Information Service delivery. The idea of establishing rural information centers dated back to the 18th century when the first attempt to improve access to information involved the collation and organization of all forms of recorded knowledge into what was then called community libraries. As time passed by, community information centers began surfacing. Their focus was on the selection, acquisition, organizing, storing and disseminating the information that was needed by rural community that they served. The rural information centers aim at supporting the development of literacy skills and supplementing the formal education provision in rural areas (El-Kalash, Uzoigwe and Mohammed, 2016).

Rural information service delivery resources may not take the form of resources in urban areas. For rural dwellers to access an information system, various information resources are required for use in rural areas. According to Kadiri (2001), one of the rural information service delivery resources is Library or Rural Library.

Rural libraries should be able to provide balanced information that can bring rural dwellers into a central focus. A rural library concept based largely on the print media has little relevance to the rural population who are not literate. The fundamental problems of the rural people is not literacy but access to certain information which could enable them improve and perform better in their various occupations. What is needed of the library is for it to act as clearing house which would coordinate community problems and queries and at the same timed link people to necessary resources. The involvement of the library in rural information service delivery can make a lot of impact in the lives of rural people in all areas of their endeavours. Materials like posters, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, filmstrips, video tapes, radio and radio cassettes will enhance the work of rural libarians in meeting the demands of their clientele.

According to Uzoegbu (2016), in the context of effective information service delivery, constant collecting, organizing, repackaging and communicating of relevant, timely, complete, reliable and accurate information in terms of communication will be more effective than dissemination. He states that communicating involves a two-way interactive process which allows feedback and follow-up, while disseminating has to do with distributing or broadcasting information without follow-up and feedback. According to him, since most rural dwellers are illiterate, only communication-oriented information delivery claimels can be effective for delivering appropriate information to them. The face-to-face discussion method noticeable in education and training programmes and also in personal contacts is communication oriented but needs to be modelled in line with the concept of effective information service delivery. It should be noted that enlightenment awareness and rural development in our rural areas depend on the nature and relevance of information the rural people received from rural information service providers. The diverse nature of rural communities indicates that their information needs are many and multidimensional, therefore, there is need to determine the totality of their information needs.

Use of Traditional Communication Media: Libarians' Perspective

The traditional communication media can be used by library or librarians in rural areas to convey realistic messages that rural people can relate to, they can use them for the purpose of delivering a concise and effective message to a small group of people. Traditional communication media are more simplistic and basic in rural information service delivery than modern form of communication and are economical and realily viable in dissemination of information in rural settings. Information centres like libraries can also use traditional communication media to communicate a face-to-face situation between the communicator and the receiver of the nessage, who are the villagers.

Traditional communication media can be used by information centres because they tend to win the confidence of rural masses and appeal to emotions of the rural people by basing events on situations encountered in the daily lives of the people, convey simple message and belief to rural people on a basis level with little or no basic edication, act as tods to encourage people to examine their personal behaviours and make changes where necessary (e.g Songs, drama and folk tales), create popular events for rural people whi di typically cost little or no money to attend (e.g. drama presentation and traditional dances), have the capacity to change and adopt the socio-political situation in the rural community through songs, dancing and folk tales. Traditional communication media are seen as an epitome of rural development and effective tools in rural information service delivery. Librarians can use them to motivate rural people in a desired direction and help them to accept social change because they are familiar to audience and have

positive feeling about what they hear, it brings about positive changes in attitude of rural people as they are informal and unscripted in nature and make information conveyance in rural areas meaningful and convincing as they are effective tools in rural set-up.

Traditional communication media are also used by information centres such as libraries for educational purposes and as tools to reform the rural people, convey educational messages through entertainment through drama presentation and traditional songs and dances, as tools for rural sensitization and awareness on various issues, to elaborate coded messages through drama languages and they serve as reliable channel of news and information gathering, processing and dissemination in many rural communities and often address local interest and concerns in local language and cultural contests which the community members can easily understood and with which they can identify.

CONCLUSION

Communication is a dynamic process which happens all the time. It could be in the form of somebody's posture, the way he walks, talks or carries out his work which communicates something to another. Communication in a simplest form can be defined as an act or process of using words, sounds, signs, behaviour to express or exchange information or to express ideas, thought, feelings, etc, to someone else. Traditional modes of communication involves the use of basic local resources, such as poems, storytelling, singing, dancing and games to convey realistic messages that citizens can relate to.

Rural information services are multidimensional and serve socially as a binding thread among different groups of rural people. The diverse nature of rural communities indicates that their information needs are many and multidimensional, therefore, there is need to determine the totality of their information needs. Such information needs can be categorized as follows; information needs in the neighbourhood which include problems of water supply, electricity supply, environmental sanitation, refuse disposal, road maintenance and drought, information needs on agriculture and allied occupation, information needs as regards to rural education, information needs on rural housing, employment opportunities, transportation, religion, recreation and culture, information needs on family matters, legal matters, crime and safety, policy and government matters and land matter.

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