

Chapter 2

Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning: A Review of Literature

Tella Adeyinka
University of Ilorin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Information literacy is regarded as the basis for learning in our contemporary environment of rapid and sophisticated technological change. As information and communication technologies develop rapidly, and the information environment becomes increasingly complex, educators are recognizing the needs for learners to engage with the information environment as part of their formal learning processes. The achievement of lifelong learning and making citizens become information literate is the target of many nations as far as millennium development goals and vision 2015 are concerned. This chapter presents a literature review on information literacy and lifelong learning pointing out the relationship between the two and their benefits, and finally, the chapter makes recommendations to improve both programs.

INTRODUCTION

Information literacy is regarded as the basis for learning in our contemporary environment of rapid and sophisticated technological change. “As information and communication technologies develop rapidly, and the information environment becomes increasingly complex, educators are recognizing the needs for learners to engage with the information environment as part of their formal learning processes” (Bruce, 2004). Bruce proceeds to say that “Information literacy is generally seen as pivotal to the pursuit of lifelong learning, and

central to achieving both personal empowerment and economic development. In addition to this, Information literacy is a natural extension of the concept of literacy in our information society, and information literacy education is the catalyst required to transform the information society of today into the learning society of tomorrow” (Bruce, 2004). Information literacy refers to the process whereby a learner develops the capacity to work independently and socially and learns to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to the information society and the wider global community (Kong, 2007, 2008). Information literacy

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can be said to be a key factor in lifelong learning. Lau (2006) refers to it as the first step in achieving educational goals. According to Lau (2006:4) “the development of such competencies should take place throughout citizens’ lives, especially during their educational years.....”

There is no doubt about the fact that every aspects of life from education, leisure, and work environment to social interactions are being influenced by information technology. Moreover, with the increasing use of Information Communication technology (ICT) in education the world over, new skills and competencies among students are required for them to effectively learn. For example, there are vast array of services that one can currently find online. These services are constantly growing, some of which are of general nature while others are specialised for students such as reference information on the Web which students can use including news, weather, sports, movies, encyclopaedias, cartoons and games among others. As an educational and entertainment tool, ICT can enable students learn about virtually any topic, visit a museum, or play an endless number of computer games with other users. Moreover, for students to exploit information resources, effectively, there is need to be equipped with the requisite digital literacy competencies. Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2002) in the United States noted that students who did not have access to computers and the Internet (among other technologies) were likely to get further behind their peers who did have such access. Such deprived students would miss the instant links to information, entertainment, and communication. In addition, they would potentially miss out on the 70 percent of jobs that require moderate or high amounts of computer knowledge, all of which pay well and probably would end up in the 10 percent of low-paying jobs that do not require technical expertise (Linn 1996). With the increased use of ICT in society generally and schools in particular, it becomes imperative that students should be

equipped with digital literacy competencies in order to exploit information resources that the electronic age engenders.

With all that have been said above, it is clear that information literacy and lifelong learning are inseparable. The former is like a drive to the other. To buttress this, (Horton, 2004) put forward that Information literacy and lifelong learning have a strategic, mutually reinforcing relationship with each other that is critical to the success of every individual, organization, institution, and nation-state in the global information society. These two modern paradigms should ideally be harnessed to work symbiotically and synergistically with one another if people and institutions are to successfully survive and compete in the 21st century and beyond (Bruce, 2004).

The achievement of lifelong learning and making citizen become Information literate is the target of many nations as far as millennium development goal and vision 2015 are concerned. Essentially therefore, this discussion presents a literature review on Information literacy and lifelong learning pointing out the relationship between them, their benefits and finally makes recommendations to improve both programs. This is considered a very significant issue in view of the fact that it will afford countries, academic institutions and private organizations such as companies the understanding of what to improve and the way to improve them as far as their information literacy and lifelong learning programs are concerned.

As our society become more advanced technologically, it has become more important for children and even adult to have the awareness of a solid foundation in Information Literacy to allow them maximum opportunities. Just as an adult lacking traditional literacy (reading and writing skills) is at a significant disadvantage in the workplace and in everyday life, so will today’s children be if they are not information literate. Although issue such as the one present in this paper is not all that new in literature

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