

Chapter 22

Integrating the “Human Library” Concept in Academic Libraries to Facilitate Tacit Knowledge Transfer: Prospects and Anticipated Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, academic libraries are expected to reposition themselves to maintain their value by introducing innovative services to meet the constant changes in user information needs. This chapter explores the concept of human library and how it may be exploited in the transfer of tacit knowledge in academic institutions and their libraries. Some benefits identified are the interactive nature of human libraries which brings back the natural mode of human communication, the opportunity to promote individual growth, and the collection of living books which serve as an educational resource. The study concludes that although adopting the human library concept has some anticipated challenges, it can help facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge in academic institutions. Hence, there is a need for academic libraries to adopt this concept as part of their innovative and creative initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of libraries in education and for national development especially in today’s information-driven society cannot be overemphasized. Libraries play a very significant role in the lives of people most especially students, academics and researchers. This is because libraries are the repositories of knowledge and fundamental to the educational outcomes of their parent institutions.

A library according to Itsekor and Nwokeoma (2017) is a collection of print and non-print items, organized and maintained for reading, studying, consultations and borrowing purposes. Similarly, Itsekor and Nwokeoma (2017) further add that, the collections in a library contain information that individuals need daily to survive because, without access to authentic and reliable information, there can be no knowledge. Itedjere et al. (2012) as cited in Itsekor and Nwokeoma (2017) note that individuals, communities, and nations are transformed by libraries because they elevate people’s minds. This suggests that, libraries are seen as a knowledge banks where different individuals can visit to seek knowledge to broaden their horizons and achieve intellectual freedom. As a result, they must be able to re-position themselves to be able to achieve this function.

Contemporary times have seen a lot of changes in the way libraries deliver their information services (Ukachi, 2010). Ogunsola (2008) notes that in our world today, libraries have evolved from being merely passive bookkeepers and preservers to becoming facilitators of information and promoters of lifelong learning with a focus on understanding users’ information needs, sources, requirements, and communicating solutions. This is because, with the widespread use of the internet for information dissemination, resource sharing, and other elements of information use, libraries must reposition themselves advantageously in terms of service delivery to remain relevant. Libraries must maintain the value of their presence, foster critical thinking, expand their service functions, and pursue new growth paths. Hence, the introduction of creative initiatives and services such as “Human Libraries”.

Blizzard et al. (2018) indicate that a human library is a gathering of “readers” who get together to hear “living books” (who are people with unique stories to tell or have faced discrimination and prejudice as well as hardships and major life challenges), recount personal stories about particular topics and after that, the readers and living books discuss the story. This conversation according to Dobreski and Huang (2016) helps connect living books to their readers leading to the transfer of undocumented knowledge.

Knowledge as defined by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) is “justified true belief”. This definition according to Neta and Pritchard (2009) is made up of three conditions. They are;

- The truth condition which requires that if an individual holds a proposition, then that proposition must be true. However, if the proposition is not true, then that individual does not know what he claims to know.
- Second is the belief condition which demands that, if an individual knows a proposition, then he believes that proposition. That is, an individual cannot make claims that they do not believe.
- Last is the justification condition. This condition requires a practical way of justifying that the belief one has is true.

From the definition, it can be said that, for an individual to make any assertions or claims, then that individual is sure of what is being said. This definition distinguishes opinions from knowledge. This is because with opinion, one is not too sure of what is being said but with knowledge, there is surety because it is based on facts. knowledge is classified under different categories by different researchers

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