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From information to knowledge

Solomon Mahapa

University of South Africa
Johannesburg, South Africa
E-mail: solomonma2002@yahoo.com

The theme of this session, From information to knowledge plays a pivotal role in many areas of life. Thus it is important that each and every country around the globe always aims to invest largely on young people in relation to matters dealing with information. The reason behind this is the fact that young people are mostly viewed as our future leaders. And therefore they should be equipped with information that will be transformed into a sound knowledge thereby adding value to various nation states. Also applicable in this reasoning is the fact that through the proper use of information young people will be able to sustain challenges that might confront them in their futuristic endeavours. In this regard my discussion will centre around young people emanating from Lenasia and Soweto schools.

The idea behind this is based on the fact that I have carried out a survey in these areas (Lenasia and Soweto) with the intention of trying to ascertain the manner in which young people from the said areas respond to various information issues which are mostly based on their school work in its entirety. Thus as purported in my abstract I discovered certain inequalities which obviously disturb the process of enriching our young people with information and thereby ensuring that they become competent leaders of tomorrow. The inequalities are mostly dominated by the availability of in-house school libraries at Lenasia as opposed to a lack or shortage of such libraries at most Soweto schools. Thus one can imagine the benefit which young people from the former schools enjoy as opposed to the disadvantage which young people from the latter schools are faced with. And this obviously result in poor mastering of information for the better half of young people emanating from a geographical position of schools under the ambit of Gauteng Department of Education. As I have mentioned earlier on I will discuss key aspects in relation to the

theme of this session from a South African perspective in which young people from the said areas are faced with in terms of dealing or handling information related issues.

Key aspects will include the following viz: 1. In-house School Libraries 2. Effective and Efficient use of Information 3. Teachers and Librarians views 4. Young people's view 5. Achievements 6. The way forward

1. In-house School Libraries

This aspect is mostly an advantage which young people from Lenasia schools enjoy. The schools around the area have a reasonably fair amount of collections within their libraries. And hence young people are able to deal with the use of information even though much room for improvement is still required. The school librarians available at these schools are able to teach young people all the necessary skills available in the proper use of information. This obviously include carrying out searches in various sources and also applying a fair amount of critically assessing the information being sought for their school work. Thus in comparison to the young people from Soweto schools the above can be achieved only if the Education department can realise the need to have libraries in such Schools. And this impacts negatively to the young people from the schools under discussion but nevertheless Public libraries are somewhat playing a major role in ensuring that young people are being taught the necessary skills applicable in the use of information. And these young people are showing a lot of initiative in terms of trying to master the skills applicable in information use. Testimony to this is the regular usage of public libraries even during school holidays. And this clearly shows that young people are willing to learn all the skills applicable in information use and one could also deduce that these skills will help them in every aspects of their academic lives.

2. Effective and Efficient use of Information

The above aspect mostly benefit young people from Lenasia schools in a way, but this does not mean young people from Soweto are totally ineffective and inefficient in terms of the proper use of information. The reason behind this as mentioned earlier on is the availability of school libraries which benefits the other group. What is mostly experienced as expressed by school librarians interviewed in Lenasia area is that young people are able to identify most of the sources required for their school assignments or projects, but they lack the ability to analyse the content of such information as described in sources. The common trend is that these young people are unable to transform the information into a meaningful form without copying verbatim. This is a sentiment which is shared by both Teachers and School librarians in the area. Even though an improvement is witnessed in various cases, the assertion noted by the above mentioned mentors clearly shows that there is still room for training which should be applied. Whilst reflecting on young people from Soweto schools the trend is somewhat different. The only reliance for these young people is that of Public libraries which is mostly available after hours. Thus the effectiveness and efficiency of information thereof still appear as a major problem to the majority of these young ones. The Public librarians are playing a pivotal role in helping these young regarding the identification and proper use of information for school assignments and projects. Even though they (Librarians) unable to spend most of their time with these young people as they have other matters to attend to, but the important part is that librarians are trying by all means to promote the effective and efficient use of information. The importance of being able to use effectively and efficiently is mostly as a result of being able to deal with complex information issues which might include assignments, projects and other various tasks. Thus it is imperative for young people to learn from an early age how to search for information, to use it critically and most importantly to convert such information into knowledge. The important part that I have discovered with these two groups of young people is that they are showing a lot of character in terms seeking to empower themselves with the proper use of information. And even though the other part of the coin are at an advantage, that does not deter the other part from seeking to improve their skills in that

respect. This means that young people from Soweto are at a disadvantage but their regular visits to the Public libraries clearly shows that they are prepared to empower themselves with information.

3. Teachers and Librarians views

Firstly the reflection will be on Teachers who are the main mentors of these young people. Their assertion as per the interview carried out is that they think it is important for young people to be able to deal with complex information at an early and thus be able to transform such information into a meaningful form so as to add value thereof. They also expressed that it is always to give out assignments and projects which requires the carrying out of research by young people. This will obviously help them as they grow to maturity and enter various fields of academic or perhaps the job market which will obviously call for a research. Librarians are also of the same view and express a need for young people to keep up pace with the changing world in terms of information related issues. They also emphasised that it is important for young people to be taught the necessary skills of information use through the usage of various computer programs in the library field. Thus for both young people emanating from Lenasia and Soweto schools the assertion expressed by both Teachers and Librarians from the two camps clearly denotes that there is a lot of improvement being observed from the said young people in matters dealing with information. Thus from what I have discovered I can attest to the fact that our young people from the South African context are improving their skills in the usage of applicable information and this will obviously help them in their futuristic endeavours in cases where they will be faced by complex issues. Importantly again is the fact that an interaction between Teachers and Librarians is of paramount importance. The idea being aimed at ensuring that young people are constantly encouraged to develop a need to master all the skills applicable in the proper use of information. Content analysis was also a concern expressed by both Teachers and Librarians interviewed. They hinted that the regular use of information would gradually eradicate this problem and our young people would definitely know how to critically assess information and thereby analyse the content thereof. Whilst the major concern of Teachers from Soweto schools was largely based on the availability of in-house libraries, but they complemented the Public librarians for a job well done in ensuring that young people from the said area are equipped with the necessary skills in mastering the use of information. Their concern rests with the Gauteng Department of Education which must ensure that schools within that vicinity are afforded the necessary school libraries with a fair amount of collections which will obviously be supplemented by the collections available at Public libraries. Thus in a true sense mentors from both camps expressed a great satisfaction the way in which their young people respond to information related issues.

4. Young Peoples' views

Young people from Lenasia who were interviewed expressed a dire need to master the skills applicable in the use of information. They hinted that the manner in which they seek information is still at an infancy stage, the reason being that there is a high volume of information available in which one must ensure that he or she picks up the relevant information as opposed to the irrelevant one. They also stated the confusion that always confronts them when they seek to break down the information to a formidable form. Thus assistance is regularly sought from both school and public librarians in an attempt to identify the relevant information. Some of the reasons highlighted for the above is the time frame in which the school assignments or projects are due. This obviously impacts negatively as they have to rush on getting the relevant information for the required assignment or project. Whilst young people from Soweto schools hinted the obvious factor which is the lack of in-house school libraries. And this impedes their desire in trying to learn the skills available in mastering the usage of information. Another point they highlighted was that of shortage of certain sources of information in their public libraries whereby they pointed out that their public libraries are not well stocked and they sometimes battle to acquire the relevant information for their history or science projects. Thus the views as expressed by these young people clearly shows that given the appropriate resources they will obviously be in a better position to tackle

complex issues which are mostly govern by information. And another worrying factor as they hinted was the technological changes which are being dominant in every facets of life, and this obviously calls for a need for them to able to deal with information of whatever nature in order to ensure betterment in their lives. As they pointed out one can deduce that these young people are willing to learn more about information use and thereby stand up to whatever challenges that they may come across.

5. Achievements

On the above aspect, I discovered that young people who effectively use information in the right form always achieve the best results. The indication I had gathered at Lenasia is that best achievers attribute their success to the effective and efficient use of information. They also pointed out that is always imperative for one to be able to assess the given information so as to analyse its content rightly in the quest the forming a sound base of knowledge within ones' mindset. This implies that a young people who applies all the skills necessary for the proper use of information should be able to transform such information into knowledge hence the theme of this session is termed 'From information to knowledge. Teachers at the above school are mostly proud of their young people as they participate in various sessions with other schools from designated areas. These sessions are mostly govern by debating sessions whereby young people from different schools express their facts and points on divergent topics. These topics are brought forth to test the researching skills of young people that is where one can be able to see that young people are able to deal with information or are not able at all. Thus most of the young people from Lenasia school have won certain accolades in relation to their debating skill. And others are awarded merit certificates in certain subjects such as English, Maths or Science. These achievements clearly denotes that recipients thereof are able to deal with information related issues effectively. Whilst reflecting on young people from Soweto schools their achievements are somewhat the same as those of young people from Lenasia schools. But theirs are witnessed at their influx in institutions of higher learning whereby they enrol in large numbers to pursue various educational programs. This does not imply that young people hailing from Lenasia schools are not enrolling in massive numbers, the point that I am trying to highlight is that young people from Soweto as per their assertion believes that getting the best results at school level will ensure them a place at institutions of higher learning. But all in all young people from both camps (Lenasia and Soweto) always ensure that they achieve the best results so as to enrol at institutions of higher learning for the betterment of their future and that of their country.

6. The Way Forward

This aspect can directed mostly to the Teachers and Librarians as mentors of these young people in that they must ensure that the said young people are constantly engaging in the use of information in their everyday lives. And this cannot be left alone to the said mentors even the Educational stakeholders at the said designated areas must ensure that schools in particular those from Soweto are afforded the necessary school libraries with a fulltime librarian to ensure the proper use of information by our very own young people. Thus in conclusion I can attest to the fact that young people from the South African context in particular the above discussed schools are showing a lot of initiative in terms of mastering the skills necessary for the proper use of information. And thus they will carry such initiative for the rest of their lives so as to empower our country with the necessary skills in order to compete fairly with other countries around the globe.