

Information and Knowledge Policy Framework to Enhance the Effectiveness of Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4)

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ABSTRACT

The capability of Namibia's residents, institutions and communities to effectively seek, access, evaluate, create and use knowledge and information to innovate is absolutely necessary for achieving the goals of the fourth National Development plan (NDP4). The paper aims to analyse, study and evaluate the extent to which the Fourth Namibia National Development Plan (NDPs) provides for and integrates access to information and knowledge strategies as its normative and implementation components. Using other national policies and legislation on information and knowledge in place, the study outlines information and knowledge gaps identified and indicates concisely how the NDP4 could have been enhanced by inclusion of substantial information and knowledge strategies for its effective implementation as well as smooth achievement of Namibia Vision 2030. The paper recommends the establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable set of policy and strategic instruments with clear guidelines to enhance the contribution of access to information and knowledge to the achievement of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4).

KEYWORDS – Knowledge and information policies; library and information services; information and communication technologies; Namibia development plans; access to information; access to knowledge

1. Introduction and Background

Namibia formerly called South West Africa (SWA) gained its independence on 21 March 1990, after a long and bitter war of independence with Apartheid South Africa (Akawa, 2014). The history of library and information services in Namibia was determined during the era of South African rule, when according to Wayne and Donald (1994) the largest libraries were controlled by the directorate of white education. The public library service was established in 1965 by the administration of whites department and access to the library was only granted to the selected minority group until 1985 when the library began to offer services to all races. Libraries of different types have been built across the country to take library services to the Namibian people. The legislation for Namibia Library and Information Services Act 4, which was enacted in 2000 established the framework under which Library Operate today.

The country has inherited a good physical infrastructure, market economy, rich natural resources and a strong public administration, but it has been experiencing many developmental challenges since independence. It has however managed to tackle some of the problems such as access to basic education, primary health care services, and safe water (World Bank, 2014). In 2012, the Namibian government removed school fees to provide free education at primary school level and in 2015, free secondary school education was introduced. Two new ministries - Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME development, and the Ministry of Poverty Eradication - were recently created to work closely to bridge inequality by eradicating of poverty in the country (Geingob, 2015).

Namibia vision 2030, calls for improved quality of life of Namibians to the level of developed countries by year 2030 (Office of the President, 2004). According to NIDA document on Supporting Society's Needs: a Model Framework for Developing Library Policy (2011), Namibia has a network of library and information centres that have been expanded to provide better coverage of previously disadvantaged regions. The network consists of national, special/scientific, academic school and community libraries, including the National Archives. NIDA document further state that an information gap exists between rural and urban areas of Namibia. This information gap is characterised by multiple combinations of poverty, uneven infrastructure and lack of access to facilities such as libraries, low rate of various literacies (information, digital, media) that are necessary to consume and interpret information resources, lack of materials written in the multiple indigenous languages used by the communities across the country are some identified challenges contributed to information gap. The vision 2030 initiative has provided opportunities for library and information services to contribute to the achievement of knowledge based economy, however the library sector is affected by the identified barriers, and shortage of qualified librarians and Information Technologies Librarians (IT) to effectively deliver quality library services to the users (Iilonga, (2015), Nengomasha, Yule & Uttoni (2012).

Kargbo (2011) on public library services in knowledge economy, the Sierra Leone experience, urged government to prioritise on investing in libraries which are storehouse of knowledge and information where people can access knowledge to improve their education, health, nutrient and economic advancement. Libraries make significant contribution to education, ensure social inclusion and cohesion by providing access to all and create citizen awareness.

In Mauritius, library and information services development was poor after independence which resulted on poor image and low status, lack of recognition, poor budget, lack of professional staff, conservative librarians, unattractive salaries, sub-standard libraries and absence of proper legislation (Ramjaun, 1997). Namibia has been independent for 25 years, and some of Mauritius challenges are still apparent based on the studies discussed above.

2. The objectives

The paper's objectives are therefore to study and review literatures on Namibia information and knowledge policies and analyse the provision of the Fourth Namibia National development Plan on access to information and knowledge strategies, Identify challenges and recommendations toward developing a national policy on information and knowledge. The objectives are aligned with the four pillars of knowledge economy framework.

3. Namibia Library and Archive Services

The mandates of the Directorate of Namibia Library and Archive Services under the Ministry of Education is: (a) to facilitate the development of information and computer literacy skills through public, community and ministerial libraries; (b) to ensure that citizens have access to all sorts of information/knowledge in all formats (including Braille and audio books for visually impaired); (c) to set standards that support oral traditional and indigenous knowledge; (d) provide facilities to support individual and self-conducted education (Open Distance Learning) as well as formal education at all levels; (e) provide facilities and equipment enabling knowledge transfer and acquisition; and (f) provide reading and research space to improve the community socioeconomic development (Namibia Library and Archives Services, 2014).

It is reported that there are 64 community libraries across the 14 regions of Namibia, three (3) University libraries and several special libraries (Namibia Library and Archives Services, 2014). Those library and information centre can render knowledge services to the Namibians. In addition to the mentioned library and information centres, the Millennium Challenges Account (MCA) (2014), have built and well stocked three (3) regional libraries in three different regions for the Namibian community to become lifelong learners which is required in the global knowledge economy (World Bank, 2003).

4. NDP4 BACKGROUND

The Office of the President (2012) reported that, Namibian government inherited a dual economy with the four inter-related challenges of economic growth, a high rate of poverty, inequitable distribution of wealth and income, and high unemployment at independence in 1990. The government has been addressing those challenges through various developed National Development Plan (NDPs) of five years planning cycle, that are responding to the main long term plan vision 2030, a vision that is guiding Namibia to make deliberate efforts to improve the quality of life of its people to the level of their counterparts in developed world by the years 2030 (Office of the President, 2004).

The overall goals of NDP4 are:

- High and sustained Economic growth
- Employment Creation
- Increase Income Equality

NDP4 is also a five year cycle plan like the other three preceding's NDPs (1) (2) (3). NDP4 cycle is currently in progress covering the period from 2012/13 to 2016/17 respectively. Successful implementation of the NDP4 will enable Namibia in subsequent

NDPs, to shift focus to the other priority issues and sectors in the request to realise vision 2030 (Office of the President, 2012).

Information on job opportunities in a certain sector cannot flow due to lack of internet access, economic inequality. The policy implementation will ensure to provide access to information in rural areas to establish equitable economic growth throughout Namibia. The focus will be on investing in strategic infrastructure programmes and projects that are linked to the kind of economic structure for the knowledge based society envisaged by Vision 2030. NDP4 document indicated that “competitiveness is measured on our ability to adopt and innovate, not on the amount of mineral or other natural resources we are able to export” (Office of the President, 2012. Pg. 77). One of the desired outcome for 2017 is to have adequate ICT infrastructure in place to facilitate economic development and competitiveness through innovation, research and development.

5. Identification of Access to Information and Knowledge Gaps in the NDP4 document

Access to information and knowledge is fundamentals to all aspects of people's lives. Prospects for it depend in part of creating an enabling environment for free and independent sources of information and knowledge and the widespread availability of the ICT, production of the local digital content and developing the capacity to use them (UNESCO, 2009). NDP4 document did not discuss much of the importance of access to information and knowledge strategies in any of the priorities identified issues. NDP4 have identifies five basic enablers for economic development which are: The Institutional Environment; Education and Skills; Health; Extreme poverty; and Public Infrastructure. Access to information is discussed under Public Infrastructure section, which is referring to ICT as an infrastructure enabling fast access to information which is prerequisite for literacy and knowledge creation. Under Public Infrastructure also identified the challenge of access to knowledge and information for economic growth but this challenge is not listed under the priorities challenges that are highlighted with their implication and strategies to address them. Under institutional Environment, there is a component for access to skills where NDP4 have identified limited access to quality skills and a mismatch in the supply of and demand skills persist as severe constraints in the Namibian economy that is preventing the country from achieving a higher growth rate. In the knowledge economy document by Chen & Dahlman, (2005) implied that a knowledge economy need knowledge strategies that involve the tapping of existing global knowledge and adoption of foreign technologies to local conditions in order to enhance domestic productivity.

NDP4, Institutional environment enabler of economic development have also identify R & D Innovation as fairly low in Namibia and include the challenge in the list of high level strategy to be addressed by promoting R & D innovation; and increase public access to environmental information. There is no mention of provide information and knowledge resources for research and development to enable promotion of R & D innovation which is also identified by Education and Skills enabler to increase R & D spending to at least 0.3% of GDP, and the strategy to address shortage of teachers in the countries. The Health enabler has high strategy for information and knowledge, which identified Access to health information, but did not include shortage of library human resources, and health information resources as challenges. Thus also applied to the Extreme Poverty enablers, with the strategy to increase research into the cause of poverty in order to address the cause rather than the symptoms as a challenges.

Mchombu & Mchombu (2014) study on the role of Information and Knowledge in Poverty Eradication in Africa: a case study of Namibia find that all strategic interventions in poverty eradication in Namibia have vast implications for access to the right information and knowledge at the right time.

It is evident from the NDP4 document that library and Information services sector challenges was not prioritised. UNESCO document on Information for all (2009) reported that the distribution of access to information and knowledge between urban and rural communities and between developed and developing countries is inequitable and that is resulting in the digital divide which is a national challenges that need to be identified in NDPs. However, NDPs do not provide details programs on how to achieve the various identified goals and targets. These are left with various offices, ministries, and agencies responsible for relevant sectors. Those are done by various line ministries responsible to develop Annual Sectoral Execution Plans (ASEPs) in line with the priority areas that are based on the strategies identified in the NDP4, by identifying concrete programs and projects in their particular sectors. The ASEPs submission proposals inform the basis allocation of budget to specific ASEPs. Proposals outline clearly how specific activities will contribute to achieving the overall targets and objectives for the relevant five year NDP4 periods.

6. Provision of Access to Information and Knowledge Services within other Namibian Policies

Despite the insufficient integration of challenges issues and strategies on access to library and information services (information and knowledge) in the Namibian NDP4, just as indicated that detailed program on how to achieve NDP4 lay with the mandate of individual offices, ministries, and agencies. Various Namibian policies and strategies developed by government ministries have included the importance of library and information services (information and knowledge) in their policies and strategies documents. These include the Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) (2005) that call for the development of knowledge and innovation policy that guide and support Namibia to transit to a knowledge based economy. ETSIP recognise the need for stocking of libraries with information and knowledge resources and good ICT provision. This inclusion was translated into the actual implementation plan in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework of 2014/2015 to 2016/2017 document that outlines library and Information Services (Information and Knowledge) projects, funding and composition of expenditure, description, impact and activities.

Library projects in the strategic programs identifies include:

- Refurbishment and extension of library at Hifikepunye Pohamba University of Namibia Campus
- Construction of Outapi Community Library in Omusati Region: the library will function as a regional library providing facilities to support the community and school library network in the region, which will also be a regional knowledge centre. It will consist of study and reading areas, research facilities, meeting and training rooms including video conferencing facility, references area, ICT room, children section, library information resources collection for print and electronic, storage rooms, community hall, regional record centre, offices, toilets and parking areas.
- Construction of Community Library and Learning Development Centre at Uukwangula in Oshana Region
- Construction of a Community library and learning Development Centre at Ngoma

Those library projects will be constructed as sources of learning, and ICT public access point and a meeting place for community members. They will be furnished with information and knowledge resources for all levels of education and for social and economic development of the community. The aim is to address social and economic inequalities and rural poverty through access to meaningful information and learning resources, access and promotion of ICT literacy and improve educational opportunity for lifelong learning. All projects are to be constructed in the rural and previous disadvantage areas in Namibia and are set to achieving the NDP4 goal of High and Sustained Economic Growth. In addition, in addition, there is a project for Libraries for Development in the Ministry of Education run in partnership with the Finish Library Association in promoting of the knowledge based society and public use of Information Communication Technologies at libraries by facilitating training workshop in ICT for librarians and community members in 22 community libraries in Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2015). ICT provision to libraries and Information services are deployed to community's libraries through the ICT for Education Policy that ensure that access to publicly funded information means are freely made available to the communities and individual gaining access to ICT and information resources (Ministry of Education, 2005) and (Office of the Prime Minister, 2014) in the Policy for E-government Strategic Action Plan for the Public Service of Namibia 2014-2018, on the effort for the transition of Namibia Into knowledge Based Economy also have identified four (4) categories of the country readiness for e-government which are: Policy, Access, Capabilities, and Willingness.

7. The four Pillars of Knowledge Economy Framework and application to library

According to the world bank (1998), A Knowledge Economy is one that utilises knowledge to develop and sustain long-term economic growth, thus the Knowledge Economy framework focuses on four pillars which it suggests are needed to support a successful knowledge economy.

7.1. Pillar 1: Economic and Institutional Regime

The first pillar of the framework is an **economic and institutional regime** that is conducive to the creation, diffusion, and utilization of knowledge. A regime that provides incentives that encourage the use and allocation of existing and new knowledge efficiently will help to foster policy change. According to UNESCO (2009) a country should create an enable environment for the knowledge economy by strengthening its legal and regulatory frameworks for competition, entrepreneurship, firm restructuring, intellectual property, emergence of new markets in products and services, and openness to trade and foreign investment, so as to permit individuals and organizations to respond to changing opportunities and demands in flexible and innovative ways. With regards to pillar 1, the Namibia library and information Act 4 of 2000 section C (6) has outlined clear guideline and functions of Namibia library and information services in ensuring quality knowledge and information acquisitions, processing and dissemination (Government Gazzette, 2000). Namibia vision 2030 shows its apprehension about the innovative use of both tacit and codified forms of knowledge and technology to help the country advance from a resource based into a knowledge-based economy and for the country to improve the people's access to information, technology and knowledge. Ramjaun (1997) indicated the absence of proper legislation as one of the reason to poor library and information services in Mauritius after independence which the study by Kargbo (2011), supported that libraries in Sierra Leone are not used because their existence is not recognised by decision-makers. Nengomasha,

Uutoni and Yule study on (2012) find worrisome situation of Namibian teachers not giving library oriented tasks to the learners reason being that teachers do not see the relevance and contribution of school libraries in supporting the curricula and teaching activities. The Nengomasha, Yule & Uutoni study provides evidence that the school regime is not providing incentive to encourage learners to use the existing knowledge to improve their performance at school and become lifelong learners.

Institutional regime should allocate research resources and stimulating creativities and incentives for the efficient creation, dissemination and use of knowledge (Chen and Dahlman (2005). Expropriating of knowledge in Africa is too poor due to challenges such as: shortage of local knowledge resources; shortage of local publishing, lack of access to local relevant materials (Mchombu and Cadbury, (n.d), Nengomasha et al (2015). with the deficient of the local knowledge and information resources, Chen and Dahlman (2005) urge that sustained economic growth in the era of the new world economy depends on developing successful strategies that involve the sustained use and creation of knowledge at the core of the development process. Knowledge strategies that involve the tapping of existing global knowledge and adoption of such foreign technologies to local conditions in order to enhance domestic productivity. The government should protect property rights to encourage entrepreneurship and knowledge investment.

7.2. Pillar 2: Building Well-educated and skilled human capital population

The second pillar is a **well-educated and skilled population** that creates, shares, and uses knowledge efficiently.

The framework postulated that a well-educated and skilled population is essential to the efficient creation, acquisition, dissemination and utilisation of relevant knowledge which tend to increase total factors of productions and enhance economic growth. To increase people's capacity to learn and to use information, the capacity to acquire and use information purposefully is acquired through the information literacy skills training by librarians who are role players in the lifelong learning process. The program educate people on how to acquire and use knowledge, provide access to knowledge resources and facilities including indigenous knowledge or cultural knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is preserve in public libraries and archives as well as arts and museum collection to support lifelong learning (Bryson, 2001). There is an urgent need to reform the education system s and enable lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2009).

In the knowledge economy, librarians need to realign their roles from being providers and organisers of information to facilitators and educators of people on information access and process through information literacy teaching which is described by Lloyd (2003) as a meta-competency that encapsulates the generic skills of defining, locating and accessing information.

The study by Mondagnes (2001) find that libraries received the lowest priority in educational budget spending, which hinder proper development. This is however also a true reflection of the Namibian libraries (communities and schools) that are not well resourced and collections are outdated and not relevant to the community they are serving. Library user education or information literacy is not conducted due to the fact that school teachers do not support libraries and the relevance and contribution in supporting the curricula and teaching activities. Most Namibian school and communities libraries do not have

professional librarians (Iilonga (2015a), Nengomasha, Uutoni and Yule (2012).

Nengomasha, Uutoni and Yule (2012) present the clear picture of what is happening on the ground in the library and information sector in Namibia which is not corresponding to the mandate of the library and information service Act 4 of 2005 section (6) whose function support the knowledge economy framework which are to:

- Collect, develop and supplement materials which meet the needs of users
- Subject to archives act 1992 Act 12 of 1992, which his to collect, preserve or document information pertaining to local events, customs and history (indigenous Knowledge)
- Make information resources accessible to people
- Give advice and guidance to users, promote and encourage people to use the library information resources.

The Namibia basic education curriculum has Basic Information Skills as a subject to equip learners with library and information skills that enable them to fully use information to generate knowledge for lifelong learners (NIED, 2015). A study by Kargbo (2011) on public library services in the knowledge economy, the Sierra Leone Experience, find that in Sierra Leone, show that librarians are lagging behind in executing libraries services and advocating to policy and decision makers. Librarians need to take a proactive role in educating the public about the crucial role that library play in national development such as providing current awareness, disseminate knowledge for socioeconomic development, provide information and knowledge searching life skills training to the community including the entrepreneurs to be capable of improving human life and strengthen economic of the world. The study by Chiware and Dick (2007) also show lack of awareness of knowledge resources by SME in Namibia.

7.3. Pillar 3: Building a National Information and Knowledge infrastructure

The third pillar is a dynamic **information infrastructure** that facilitates the communication, dissemination, and processing of information and technology. The increased flow of information and knowledge worldwide reduces transactions costs, leading to greater communication, productivity and output.

ICT are the backbone of the knowledge economy which is recognised as an effective tool for promoting economic growth and sustainable development. ICT have revolutionised the transfer of information and knowledge around the world which is one of the benefit associated with ICT usage because it allow information to be transmitted relatively inexpensively and efficiently in terms of cost. The increased in flow of information will result in more technologies to be acquired and adapted more easily leading to increased innovation and productivity.

In the knowledge economy index ranking (World Bank, 2012), Namibia is classified as one of the highest countries with good ICT infrastructure in Africa, ranked at number six (6) with Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Cape Verde and Botswana. However, the good ICT infrastructure is found to be underutilised, which hamper it to serve as a potential vehicle for the transmission of knowledge to diverse users (Iilonga, 2012a); (NIDA, 2011); (Smith, et al. 2008:41); and (Marope, 2005). Other researchers find lack of awareness of the existence of library services and facilities among the community's members as another factor that contributed to underutilised library ICT infrastructures (Iilonga, 2012b; Chiware & Dick, 2008). The Namibia Education ICT policy (2005) made provision for library to provide access to ICT in order to achieve lifelong learning. To achieve that, government

must ensure that library services are made available within the formal education community and beyond into the informal education community, because they serve as both formal and informal education system, and ensure access to all as guidance to knowledge for the country and portal for all types of knowledge. This policy recommends that libraries should have an internet enabled ICT facility to support these educational activities.

7.4. Pillar 4: creating a strong and effective national Innovation system

The final pillar is an efficient **innovation system** of firms, research centres, universities, think tanks, consultants, and other organizations that applies and adapts global knowledge to local needs to create new technology. In Chen and Dahlman study, (2005) innovation system refers to the network of institutions, rules and procedures that influences the way by which a country acquires, creates, disseminates and uses knowledge. As discussed in the world bank knowledge economy framework, Chen and Dahlman study confirmed that institutions in the innovation system include universities, public and private research centres and policy tanks, non-governmental organization and the government. An effective system is one that provide an environment that nurtures research and development (R&D) which results in production of new goods and services.

The government of Namibia has recognized the importance of Research, Science and Technology as an engine of economic growth and development, by establishing a National research commission for science and technology as enacted by the Research Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act no 23 of 2004).

Innovation capability is refer to ability to utilize skills and knowledge to successfully digest, master, and improve existing technologies and to create new one (Intan-Soraya and Chew, 2010). Innovation elements include new knowledge, scientific inventiveness, technology, market, enterprises, competitiveness, and entrepreneurialism. Library and information services can tap in to provide and facilitate access to knowledge and create awareness of knowledge and information to achieve the elements of the innovation system (Bullen, Fahey and Kenway (2006). Empowerment can be on creating awareness on small scale enterprises information on application for credit, production diversity, alternatives to become a community driven knowledge economy with capacity, skills and competency to acquire knowledge in order to contribute to the governance of their community (Kargbo, 2011, Ahmed, 2010). The study conducted by Mchombu in (2012) in Namibia find that Namibian adults needed information to enable them to set up their own small business while young need information on job opportunities.

Innovation system is about applying and adapting global knowledge to local needs to create new technology. Namibia library sector is faced with many challenges, in the document on supporting people's needs in Namibia knowledge based economy (NIDA, 2011), urged the government of Namibia to work with international partners to clearly plan and provide funding for quality library services and facilities that include books in order to make access to knowledge resources available to all Namibian. The document also highlight that library need to make information available in all formats that are preferable to the needs of users for day to day survival; research and education; agricultural and rural development; SME development; health; environment; technology and legal and government information. The University of Namibia Libraries subscribed to electronic resources databases and provide access to scientific journals and open access databases for research and development. The electronic resources are accessible on and off campus (Ilionga, 2012a, Namhila & Ndinoshiho, 2011). A study conducted in USA by Cervone (2010) urge librarians to

investigate on effective innovation system from commercial organization to see where the technology is going and what others are doing to apply lesson learned from the commercial sector to the library because the expectations of users are being set in the commercial sector not in the libraries. Cervone states that Facebook, twitter, and iPhone apps are driving the wants and needs of library patrons, not the OPACs.

8. Recommendation

The freedom and ability to receive and impart information is a basic human need and right as affirmed by Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Access to information is fundamental to all aspects of our lives: in leaning, at work, in staying healthy, improving our individual and collective rights, in being entertained, in knowing our history, in maintaining our cultures and languages and in participating actively in democratic societies (UNESCO, 2009). Our society need to be empowered to seek, evaluate, use, and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals for national development and to bridge the digital divide. Libraries, public archives, telecentres, community multimedia centres and other community-based centres are key access to information for development of the communities which are therefore need to be positioned in all areas where they are easily accessible to the communities. ICT tools are a necessary but not sufficient precondition for the societal and political process of developing knowledge societies. Government needs to lay knowledge and information foundation through establishment of National Knowledge and Information policy that will facilitate the country's development of Network infrastructure where physical and logical networks and systems for provision of sound, data, and images, to ensure availability of modern communication networks and advanced information technologies (IT) and involvement of industries are ensured; the information and content capable of providing new services and content through communication networks; human capacity, capability and competencies of the population for the implementation of the policy.

With a strong National Knowledge and Information policy in place and integrated in all sectors of development for proper guidance toward implementation of National Development Policy (NDPs) in achieving Vision 2030.

9. Conclusion

The study outlines information and knowledge gaps identified and indicates concisely how the NDP4 could have been enhanced by inclusion of substantial information and knowledge strategies for its effective implementation as well as smooth achievement of Namibia Vision 2030. The paper recommends the establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable set of policy and strategic instruments with clear guidelines to enhance the contribution of access to information and knowledge to the achievement of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) and forthcoming NDPs. According to UNESCO (2009) Singapore was a developing country with shanty towns at Independence but managed to achieve economic growth rates that surpass those of industrialised nations in just a four decades by promoting knowledge through education and creativity. An example that Namibia can benchmarked with.

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