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Towards Restructuring Library and Information Science Curricula for the Challenges of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Environment in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper deals with restructuring of library and information science curriculum for the challenge of ICT environment. The paper highlights the following areas: conceptual framework, qualities of Library and Information Science curriculum, rationale for restructuring library and information science curriculum, areas in library and information science curriculum that requires changes, rolls of National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and other related bodies in restructuring of library and information science curriculum. The following Information Communication Technology (ICT) courses: electronic resources management, management of social media tools, website design and management, networks and networking, software design and management, database design and management, innovation and creativity were identified as ICT fields that can be integrated into the curriculum. The paper reveals that the curricula of most library schools in Nigeria examined do not contain some ICT components that are relevant to librarians in training for them to be effective in the modern society. The implication of the paper is that heads of library schools in Nigeria should identify the

loop-holes in the curricula and take pragmatic measures in reviewing and restructuring the curriculum for library and information science education professional that can deliver in ICT dominated society.

Key words: Library Science, Library School, Information Science, Curriculum, ICT Environment

Introduction

It is no longer news that the world is a global village where everything virtually has gone digital. The effect of digital reality in every profession is no longer in doubt. According to Ebrahimi (2009), rapid advances in information technology have provided new learning methods and environments. Information professionals need to be technologically ready to face challenges in the digital era because the emergence of electronic media has opened up new avenues, and time is ripe to consider these things in framing a curriculum for Library and Information Science (LIS) programme (Singh & Shahid, 2010). The advancement of ICT as noted by Hashim and Mokhtar (2012) has brought a lot of challenges not only on the library and information services but also on the roles and expectations of the librarians and information professionals.

The shift from traditional ways of providing library and information services to modern ways being orchestrated by ICT calls for reappraisal of the curricula of library and information science education. The methods of teaching library education about three decades ago have to give way to a new approach if library and information science practitioners are to remain relevant in the scheme of national and global development.

In spite of the rapid changes taking place in the library and information science arena, it is disheartening to observe that many libraries/librarians are yet to move along with the changes. In fact, most librarians lack the requisite skills to function effectively in the ICT environment, while on the part of the institutions; lack of funds has been an impediment to the switch from traditional library practice to modern library practice.

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that there is an urgent need to review and restructure the curriculum of library and information science programme. The well-being, success and impact of any profession depend to a large extent on the curriculum used in training them as well as the competence of the teachers and this apparently validates the need for a phenomenal expansion of the curriculum of library science.

The objectives of this paper are:

i.   To identify the need of restructuring LIS programmes.

ii.   To identify areas in library and information science curricula that need restructuring
iii. The roles of NLA, NALISE and LRCN towards restructuring the curricula of Library and Information Science
iv.   Make recommendations.

Curriculum: Conceptual Framework

A curriculum is the total learning experience provided by a university, college or school. It includes the content of courses (the syllabus), the methods employed (strategies) and other aspects like norms and values which relate to the way the university/school is organized. It outlines the skills, performances; attitudes and values students are expected to learn from schooling.

Edegbo (2011) citing Ocholla (2005) sees a curriculum as a fundamental part of any education or training programme largely because it provides not only a list of courses or modules offered in a programme, but it also gives information on content, purpose, method, time/duration, trainers and location or situation of a successful dispensation of manpower training and education. Curriculum, according to Aina (2007), must be in tandem with the requirement of both the current and potential employers of library and information science trainees, and the curriculum must be relevant to the immediate environment and as well reflect international practices. Curriculum is the best barometer to reflect the challenges we face today (Virkus, 2012).

Attributes of Library and Information Science Curriculum

The library and information science curriculum, according to Uwa (2007), evolved through three epochs, namely, the pre-independence era, the post-independence era and the modern times. He sees the library and information science curriculum as being dynamic, that is, it is liable to change and may at any given time include more programmes to suit changes in the environment. Nwosu (2007) aptly pointed out that majority of the courses presently offered in our library schools are lecture-based. He argued that since librarianship is a service-oriented profession, the courses as well should be more practical oriented.

According to Edegbo (2011), the curriculum of Nigerian library and information science schools is reasonably adequate in the provision of ICT courses but however contends that our curricula must be overhauled drastically if we want to retain our identity in a rapidly developing information society. Ajibola (2008) from the general perspective pointed out that the curriculum of Nigerian library schools are over ambitious, resulting in "overload", and sufficiently attuned to the needs of the labour market, particularly in prevocational and vocational/technical courses. In his

opinion, quality and relevance are the two features that curriculum development in Nigeria now needs.

Kamba (2011) observed that because library and information science schools in Nigeria are from different institutional backgrounds, some from universities and others from colleges of education, polytechnics and other institutions of higher learning, as such each offers a wide variety of ICT courses within their curriculum and the curricula are not harmonized-neither across the institutional background nor even within individual departments. He also noted that only few library and information science schools offer what can be regarded as full range of modules and what is offered cannot even be deemed to be enough.

Lawal (2009) argues that there is a fervent need to stabilize not just the content but standardize the overall programmes of library schools in Nigeria with particular emphasis on university-based schools since librarianship is now globally a graduate profession.

Rationale for Restructuring LIS Curriculum for Quality Assurance

Balarabe (2005) in his study of curriculum for library education and training in Nigeria and the challenges of information and communication technology (ICT) revealed that the contemporary challenges of information and communication technology to the curriculum for library education and training are indeed multifarious and that the curriculum is less responsive to the emerging trends in the new information age. He argued that that for Nigerian library schools to produce the right caliber of professionals who would be able to cope with the emerging challenges, the study programme of these institutions should greatly emphasize information science rather than the classical librarianship with the very few information science courses. He further expresses that most of the library and information professionals can hardly handle or operate information technologies effectively as the nature of their training is highly restricted to the acquisition and application of conventional methods of professional activities.

The curriculum used in training librarians in the 20th century is what is still being used by some, if not all library schools in training in this 21st century. But, in this 21st century, any librarian who is not vast in computer and ICT applications to library and information handling is no longer relevant to the library profession (Nwosu, 2007).

Opeke (2007) buttresses this fact by stating that the whole world is now in an information and knowledge-based economy and for the library and information science profession to take its proper position in this economy, it must produce efficient information professionals who are able to respond proactively to the needs of this economy and hence, drastic reforms are needed. According to Okoro (2007),

unless we allow the training of the professionals to pass through the oven of a standardized curriculum, we will not realize the bread of needed professionals in our institutions and society in the 21st century. In his view, no good curriculum should be static but rather should change in response to social, political and economic activities.

Besides, the library studies curriculum as pointed out by Uwa (2007) was fashioned to fit into the manual or traditional method of library operations and services. Library and information science education in Nigeria according to Edogbo (2011) cannot be relevant without effective preparation of new generations of librarians to effectively use the new information and communication technologies in their professional practices.

The infusion of ICT into all human activities as observed by Aina (2007) has completely changed the practice of library service all over the world and the curriculum of library schools in Nigeria has not responded positively to the changes in the immediate environment. According to Karisiddappa (2004), the education and training programmes in library and information science must make a provision to prepare for professionals to assume the pro-active role in coping with new technology and the information explosion.

Areas in LIS Curriculum that Require Redesigning/ Restructuring

According to Edegbo (2011), it is unarguable that developments in our society, technological or otherwise, have brought significant changes to library and information science education all over the world. It is therefore imperative that areas that the changes have taken place in librarianship be identified for restructuring. Below are the areas that need restructuring in library and information science curricula.

(a) Electronic Resources Management

The curriculum of library and information science did not capture electronic resources (e-resources) management in it and it calls for a proper review as there are many issues associated with electronic resources management. Just like the traditional information resources, we now have e-books, e-journals, e-thesis, e-magazines. The issue here is how we go about the management of electronic resources especially when we know some are free and some are not. How do we handle the issue of copyright? How do we evaluate electronic resources? Are all the electronic resources/materials useful? Is there limit to which we can download from a particular website? These and many other issues relating to electronic resources acquisition and management need to be incorporated to collection development and resources management or a new course on Electronic Resources Management de developed.

(b) **Management of Social Media Tools**

Social media have become a veritable tool for library management. We have different social media tools such as face-book, blogs, wikis, amongst others, that can be utilized in library management and feedback processes as well as information dissemination processes. If social media have become a veritable library management tool, then it would not be out of place to integrate them into the curriculum so that librarians-in-training will be acquainted with the requisite skill required of them to function effectively in their work places.

(c) **Website Design and Management**

Library and information science no doubt, is a multi-disciplinary profession and in this era of information and communication technology (ICT), libraries need to acquire skills in website design and management. In which case, it is imperative that course contents relating to how websites can be designed and managed effectively should be considered and integrated into the curriculum of library and information science whether it is accepted or not, the fact on ground is that most of the professionals handling ICT related activities in Nigeria Library Association are from computer science backgrounds. This apparently is not ideal for a noble profession as ours. According to Eze and Uzoigwe (2013), librarianship has been regarded as the mother of all disciplines. If this assertion is anything to go by, then we must wake up to the reality that library and information science is not a cross-carpeting discipline where somebody from mathematics and statistics, Bio-chemistry and computer science will cross carpet from their discipline after running a one year or eighteen months programme and now takes the centre stage of the profession whereas who underwent a four year diploma programme with one year industrial training are relegated to the background. This abnormality can only come to an end when the librarians at the first degree level or diploma are given adequate training in ICT related courses. This obviously points to the need for reviewing our ICT courses or develop a new course that will be centred on website design and management.

(d) **Networks and Networking**

Most of the ICT related contents only treat this subject on the surface. It is very important that the subject matter of networking should be incorporated into curriculum of library and information science. More so, the same way we have resources sharing in the traditional settings, there will be need for resources networking skills. Librarians-in-training should be trained on how to link user of online resources from one resource link to related resource links.

(e) **Software Design and Management**

Different software's are now being used in library and information services for variety of purposes. Library and Information Science students need to be equipped

with software design and management skills. A cursory look at the contents of curriculum used in most library schools in Nigeria revealed that this very important area of librarianship is lacking in the curriculum content.

(f) **Database Design and Management**

Database has become an important component of library and information science curriculum. Library and Information Science students who are librarians-to-be must be trained on how to design and create indigenous databases. A survey of the course content of Nigerian library schools reveals deficiency in this area.

(g) **Innovation and Creativity**

Innovation and creativity as pointed out by Ossai-Onah, Amaechi, Oduagwu and Oduagwu (2013) can be utilized as strategic approach for repositioning the 21st century librarians for effective service delivery. To them, innovation and creativity are the catalyst that transforms the landscape of library and information services into a more valuable concept. This therefore points to the need for developing a course on innovation and creativity and it has to be incorporated into entrepreneurship.

(h) **Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services**

In this digital era where there is high level shift from use of library to use of internet, library and information practitioners are expected to have adequate knowledge of marketing skills. Information provision services is no longer the monopoly of librarians, therefore in order to remain relevant in the information conscious society, it is imperative that marketing of information services is integrated into the curricula of library schools in Nigeria as this will empower the librarians to be with requisite ,marketing skills.

The Role of NALISE, NLA and LRCN in Restructuring of Library and Information Science Curriculum

All these professional bodies have their roles to play in the reviewing/restructuring of the curriculum of library schools in Nigeria. These roles are discussed in this segment of the work.

Nigeria Library Association (NLA): In the first place NLA is the apex body of library and information science practitioners in Nigeria. There is need for NLA to liaise with other sub bodies in the profession in order to come up with/identify areas of differences in the curriculum of different library schools. The NLA should identify areas where restructuring is necessary and come up with suggestions that will reposition the members of the profession for best practices.

National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE): The various lecturers and instructors in the various library schools in Nigeria can

come up with areas of needs in their institution's curricula and at the end develop uniform curricula because it is obvious that there is lack of uniformity in the curricula used in teaching library and information science students in Nigerian library schools.

Librarians Registrations Council of Nigeria (LRCN): The LRCN should work jointly with NUC in the accreditation of LIS programmes in Nigerian universities. More so, efforts should be made by the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria to have a set of prescribed courses that library schools in Nigeria should integrate in their programmes in order to reposition graduates from Nigerian library schools for effective work flow.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A critical examination of the curriculum of most library schools in Nigeria establishes that the curriculum needs to be reviewed. Though some courses on ICT have been included in the curriculum, there are still areas that need to be incorporated into the curriculum, such as; website design, electronic resource management content, management of social media tools, network and networking, software design and management, data base design and management as well as innovation and creativity.

With the wind of ICT becoming undeniable in every sector, it will do the library profession a great deal if they review the contents of the curriculum used in teaching library and information science professionals and redesign it to meet the needs of contemporary society.

The paper thus recommends

i. The urgent need for retraining of library and information science educators in Nigeria in the area of ICT.

ii. The lecturers and instructors in our library schools must be conversant with the ICT trends in place before they can enforce any meaningful change or else, there is a tendency for them to resist the changes out of fear of being displaced.

iii. Also our library schools need laboratories that are fully equipped with ultra modern ICT facilities.

iv. It is also recommended that NLA, NALISE, and LRCN should come up with modalities that can engender the reality of restructuring the curricula of library and information science programmes in Nigerian library schools not just in theory but in practice.

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