Training of Library and Information Professionals for the 21st Century Job Market in Nigeria: Implications for Curricula Re-Design

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Abstract

The paper examines the curricula of Library schools in Nigerian Universities in view of the realities of 21st century job market. The paper submits that curricula of these Schools are overdue for re-design if they are to train library and information professionals that will suit the job openings in the 21st century and beyond. Notable shortcomings in the curricula of most of the Library Schools in Nigeria are in the areas of application of information and communication technology in library and information services, entrepreneurship, as well as non realization of these schools that their products could also be employed in non library related organizations.
 The paper among other things recommends collapse of most traditional courses in librarianship and introduction of new courses that are information technology driven that will enable products of these universities to fit into the 21st century library and information science jobs. The paper concludes that there is the need for harmonization and standardization of curricula of Nigerian Universities and it calls on National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), Nigerian Library Association and Nigerian Librarian Registration Council and other stake holders in ensuring that library and information professional could be able to compete favorably for the jobs of 21st century anywhere in the World.

Introduction

Without undue exaggeration, there exists a plethora of literature on the subject of education and training of librarians in the Nigeria. Developments leading to the establishment of library and information science schools in Nigeria have been well documented in books and journal articles spanning at least four decades (Lawal, 2009).

Nigeria is the cradle of Library and Information Science (LIS) training in West Africa. Librarianship training in Nigeria started at the Institute of Librarianship at the then University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan) in 1959. Although, the training of librarianship at Ibadan was at the leadership level, nevertheless it produced the first set of indigenous librarians for West Africa. (Aina, 2007)

Aina also hinted that Bachelors of Library Science training programme was pioneered in Nigeria at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1968. Since then many other library schools have involved in training both at undergraduate and graduate levels. Library and Information Science programmes are run in thirteen (13) Federal Universities; nine (9) State Universities and four (4) Private Universities, i.e. in total of 26 out of 124 Universities in Nigeria. (JAMB, 2012).

Library and Information Science education in Nigeria is practised in most complex and diverse way. Opeke (2007), Lawal (2007), Obiora (2007), Uwa (2007), remarked that differences occur in programme structures, duration and content of courses, ways of teaching and assessment, student placement and departmental focus. As a result of these variations in Nigeria library schools, all the scholars strongly called for harmonization and standardization of the curriculum of library and information education in Nigeria. This according to them could be achieved through the collaboration of educators, practitioners, National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), Nigerian Library Association and Nigerian Librarian Registration Council.

The word "Curriculum" has been defined in various ways. Eisner (1994) sees curriculum as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences. He proceeds to address the conduct and operational consequences that are implicit to any curriculum in actions thereby indicating that the concept of curriculum is actually a plan in action. The aims and objectives of any curriculum action include the planning of the choice and method of instruction, the implementation or practice of the plan as well as the evaluation or assessment of the curriculum plan and implementation (Alaezi 1987, 1990, 1991, Jenkins and Shipman 1976).

A good curriculum should not be static, rather it should change in response to social, political and economic realities that permeate in the society (Okoro, 2007).The non-static nature of curriculum design was stressed by Kronke and Brown (1984) as cited by Njoku (1997).

Statement of the Problem

Library and Information Science (LIS) courses offered by Nigerian library schools in different universities have since become partially irrelevant. The debate about changing the LIS curricula has been going on for the last few years, but nothing concrete has yet been done at the national level, except for some cosmetic changes.

The 21st century creates a lot of challenges to Nigerian library schools in terms of training right professionals. The extent to which curricula of Nigerian Library schools in providing 21st century library and information professionals for the 21st century job market in this field is so much in doubt, hence there is need to examine the curricula of Nigerian library schools with the view of coming up with recommendations on training 21st century library and information professionals for Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives are set to guide this study:

1. To examine if the curricula of library schools in Nigeria are in consonance with the 21st century job market.
2. To come out with recommendations on curricula that will be suitable for the training of library and information professionals for 21st century jobs in Nigeria and any other part of the globe.

Literature review

Information industry is a large and complex industry. It basically encompasses all the activities involved in the creation, processing, dissemination and utilization of information; these are various identified sub-sectors in the information industry. They include publishing and book trade, libraries and information centers, archives and record centers, database producers, web publishing and design etc.

Chen et' al (1984) categorized information professionals into five areas:

Information operations, programming services and databases, sample occupational titles include database manager, management analysis.

Preparing data or information for use by others - sample occupational titles are abstractors, bibliographers, record manager, and technical writers.

Searching for and analyzing data on behalf of others – sample occupational titles are information manager, operation analysts.

Analyzing and designing information systems: occupational titles are system analysts, database designer, software specialist and programmer.

Education or training information workers – sample occupational titles are lecturer, training officer.

According to Debons et' al (1981) more than 70% of the information professionals worked outside the traditional library work situation in the U.S.A. The market in the information profession, which goes beyond traditional librarianship, is growing (Aina, 1999).In the same vein, Afolabi (1994) identified 28 career opportunities for librarians and information professionals in Africa. Indexing, abstracting, bibliographies, library consultancy, editing of books, record management, archive administration, information brokerage, intelligence information service and consular business were some of the areas identified as new careers for librarians in Africa.

The fact still remains that a large number of non-traditional library organization having a strong information component are also emerging in Africa and as such it is expected that organizations which otherwise would not have employed people with skills in library and information, may now find it necessary to recruit librarians into their organizations.

Historically, Aina,(2007) revealed that the first LIS curriculum designed in Nigeria was in 1963 after the Institute of Librarianship at the University of Ibadan decided to do away with the Library Association (UK) Examination. The university decided to design its curriculum because it was obvious that the training offered at Ibadan then was preparing graduates for the British. The curriculum consisted mainly of (Historical, social, economic and administrative background of libraries: book art: bibliography and reader services; technical services and types of libraries). This curriculum was also criticized as not reflecting situation in Nigeria, however in 1975; the programme was revamped to include courses such as oral information and rural information and community services and since then, many LIS schools in Nigeria have, over the years, been designing curricula for their various programmes.

The design of such curricula usually involved faculty members and/or librarian in the University libraries. In recent times, Library and Information Science (LIS) schools in Africa usually conduct tracer studies prior to designing appropriate curricula. (Aina and Moahi (1999); Ocholl, 2005) Other (LIS) schools use job adverts in which they would peruse various advertisements and identify LIS related jobs advertised in National Newspapers (Moi University, 1988; Synman, 2001). Aina and Moachi (1999) added that interviews with employers of librarians and other potential employers are also commonly used by LIS Schools in designing curricula.

Several studies have been carried out all over the world to determine the quality of trainees in relation to professional practice. Aina and Moachi (1999) while reporting the study of Rosenberg (1989) on the training needs of the information professionals in Kenya indicated that 60% of the jobs advertised in information handling activities were outside the traditional library work. The study also reported that the graduates were employed in a wide spectrum of organizations like publishing firms, government establishments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), financial institutions, international organizations, schools and consultancies. The study by Quaruby, Willet and Wood (1998) revealed similar findings. The implication of their findings is that library and information professionals should be trained properly to have capabilities to function in information related establishments.

Again, (Aina and Moachi (1999b) studied 24 employers of graduates of Botswana library school. The results revealed that while employers were satisfied with how the graduates performed the library tasks given to them, they indicated the need for strengthening the IT component in the curriculum. Similarly, Mabawonku and Okwilagwe (2004) in their study of IT use by lecturers of library schools found out that computers were not in sufficient numbers for teaching and research activities in Nigerian library and information science schools. Only a few of the departments surveyed had computer laboratories thus the few IT related courses in the curricula were not taught with sufficient equipment and the courses were often taught theoretically rather than being more practical. In addition, the study discovered that lecturers also lacked sufficient IT skills to enable them to demonstrate to the students. One tends to ponder how such lecturers could effectively teach students IT imbibed courses such as software applications, web design, networking, system design and management and electronic publishing.

There is a current dissatisfaction in the library and information profession about the inadequacy of LIS education to meet current individual, organizational and societal information needs (Opeke, 2007). This she attributed to a combination of various elements such as globalization, fast technological development, new organizational patterns, changing nature of work and occupation, increasing importance of information as an organizational resource as well as greater focus on organizational productivity, creating edge.

Tiamiyu (1999) opined that there is an increase in the number of subjects that information professionals are expected to know. According to him, curricula of education for information programmes should be so multi-faceted and last longer than those of other professions. The information professionals are also enjoyed to continually learn and master new technologies on the job and on a continuous basis at the risk of becoming dinosaurs in their prime.

In a survey of M.sc graduates of the University of Sheffield by Wood .et al (1987) it was revealed that half of the 94 graduates surveyed were employed in industry and commerce, and only about 13 percent were employed in a traditional library setting. In similar study at Moi University carried out by Rosenberg (1989), it was revealed that 60 percent of the jobs advertised in information handling activities were outside traditional library work. In the same vein, Britain (1987) noted that many of the jobs in the emerging market are being taken up by non-library and information science graduates because many library and information science educators have not sufficiently oriented their courses to match the jobs in the emerging market.

Moore (1987) also reported that employers of information professionals for the emerging market in the United Kingdom required skills in the areas of computer programming, systems analysis, the use of computers, management office administration, typing, journalism, press and public relations, writing and editing, advice work, statistics, research, organizing and retrieving information, librarianship, records management, training and interpersonal communication.

In a study by Aina (2007) on an ideal curriculum for African library and information job opportunities, he identified the following job markets for librarians and information specialists; traditional library settings, emerging information market and information for rural community. Aina explains further that traditional library setting skills involve equipping trainees with courses that would enable them carry out basic library and information services in a typical library setting, such as collection development, cataloging, classification, indexing, abstracting, services, circulation services, user education, bibliographies compilation, internet surfing, online searching and library automation.

The need to re-design the courses that would be taught especially in Nigerian library and information Science schools has been raised by different scholars. Aina (1999) remarked that Nigerian library schools have devoted so much time and space to some courses that should not take more than 10 lecture hours. He suggested that courses such as history of library of archives and information centers, libraries and society, library administration, history of graphic communication, collection development, reference sources and services, academic, special libraries etc should not and must not be constituted as each course. Rather, some of them could be lumped together as part of the LIS module.

The emerging market provides job outlets for librarians, who in addition to the basic library skill, also possessed knowledge about Information and Communication Technology (ICT) publishing, archives and records management, public relations/advocacy and basic statistics skills. In view of this, Aina (2007) submitted that

courses such as basic computer skills, computer applications (word processing, spreadsheet, database management systems), networking, internet surfing and web design and publishing, public relations, editing and writing, advocacy, conservation and preservation, theories of archives and records management courses be included in the curricula of library schools in Nigeria.

However, Large (1991) cautioned that a curriculum must reflect the local needs and resources. That is, the demand of the local employment market must not be ignored. Aina (2007) also shared this view as he observed that rural community information services should not be neglected in the new curriculum. He emphasized that Librarians need to be trained for the local needs, librarian skills would definitely be needed, for example in HIV/AIDS activities, agricultural extension, public health, information repackaging, management and operation of audio -visual equipment, documentation of indigenous knowledge, preservation and conservation of records, provision of query and answer services in the communities.

Veralakshmi (2006) in his study of the needs and expectations of library and information professionals in India, admitted that past few decades have brought about revolutionary changes in information handling activities as a result of advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). He remarked that such monumental changes demand new roles for library and information professionals and he therefore recommends that twenty-first century information professional must possess skills in selection, content management, knowledge management, organization of information on intranets and the Internet, research services, developing and maintaining digital libraries, and bringing information resources to the desktop.

Globalization has had a structural impact on higher education. It has affected policy making, governance, organization, academic work and the identity of higher education. Library and information science education is subject to this transformation. There is a need to blend global tendencies with local responses, all these should reflect in curricula of library schools in Nigeria.

Opeke (2007) affirmed that the global awakening to the value of information as a key resource and commodity in organizational productivity and success has elevated information and the profession of information work to new heights forcing practitioners to refocus and repackage their programmes and activities in such a way they will be able to maintain their relevance in the rapidly evolving organizational information and environment.

The 21st century job market opportunities for the library and information science professionals are huge, but Opeke raised a pertinent question; to what extent can the LIS profession be relied upon to provide the necessary personnel for the field? This question is pertinent as a result of mismatch between the 21st century jobs and training offered by Nigerian library schools.

Reghharan (2007) added his voice by echoing that if LIS professionals are to be relevant and be able to meet the requirements of the emerging job markets and manpower needs, library schools need to pay close attention to the education and training of their personnel in terms of relevance to these needs. Haigh (2007) also opined that the vision, mission and goal statement of LIS education must change to reflect evolving trends in the 21st century.

Methodology

The major instrument used in identifying relevant courses for the 21st century job market are the brochure of library and information schools in Nigeria, Africa and beyond. Some of the brochures were physically available through printed copies, but a large number of the brochures were obtained from the Internet. The researcher went through curricula of some library schools in Nigeria Africa, Europe and America. Notably among them are University of Pretoria, University of Ibadan, Tai Solarin University of Education, Babcock University, University of Cape Town Loughborough University, London City University, University of Pittsburgh and Drexel University, United States of America..

Analysis of these documents was carried out which ensured selection of relevant courses that would match 21st century jobs in library and information fields. In doing this, the researcher also made use of literature read and took cognizance of local and immediate needs of Nigerian society as well as the need to make Nigerian library and information science graduates be more competitive in international 21st century job openings in the World as it is believed that they are not only trained for the Nigerian market.

Recommendations for the proposed new Curriculum

Worldwide, it has been found that in many library schools, the curricula of LIS do not contain one or the other aspect of rapidly changing information technology to produce professionals capable of functioning in diverse information settings. The remarks of Lancaster sum up the situation "Not only had education failed to come to grip with implications of information age but library education itself has lagged behind technological developments in many ways" (Lancaster,1982)

LIS courses offered by Nigerian Library Schools in different universities have become partially irrelevant long ago. The debate about changing the LIS curricula has been going on for the last few years, but

nothing concrete has been done at the national level, except for some cosmetic changes.

To design a model curriculum for a dynamic inter-disciplinary subject like Library and Information Science on the national level is quite difficult, and such attempts will raise awkward questions regarding inclusion or exclusion of particular topics and the emphasis to be given to individual topics. Hence, relevant topics, which are missing from most curricula of LIS education, are highlighted so that it can be used as the basis for a library school to design its own curriculum in the light of the local preferences, needs and resources.

The main modules to be covered in the proposed LIS curricula are: Library and Information Science, Information and Communication Technology, Archives and Records Management, Publishing and book trade, Rural Community Information Services, Public Relations and advocacy, Research and Statistics, Communication and Writing skills. The proportions of the modules are as follows in Table1below.

Table 1: Modules of proposed curriculum

Library and Information Science	50%
Information & Communication Technology	25%
Rural Community Information Services	7.5%
Archives & Records Management	6%
Publishing &Book trade	4%
Public relations / Advocacy	2.5%
Basic Statistics & Research Techniques	2%
Communication and Writing Skills	2%
Entrepreneurship in Library & Information	1%
Total	100%

As depicted in table above, LIS module should constitute 50% of the curriculum. This is due to the fact that it is the main discipline of study. ICT module should take 25% in the programme. The reason is obvious as the profession is ICT- driven. Rural community information services module should account for about 7.5%, this is largely because majority of Nigerians still live in rural areas and they are mostly illiterates, diverse and disadvantaged . This will enable the graduates to have passion for these rural and community information services.

Archives & Records Management module is recommended to take 6%, apart from books, Archives and records, (document) constitute important information sources in institution and organizations. This will make graduates to be employer in records and documentation offices in corporate organization.

Publishing and book trade module should take about 4%. This is largely due to the fact that library and information professionals are expected to manage the publication section of any large organization. They are then expected to have the skills needed in the production, promotion / marketing and management of publication. They could also be employed in reputable Publishing houses.

Public Relations / Advocacy is the next module which is recommended to take about 2.5% of the programmes. Since social economic realities make this imperative for libraries and other information centers to competing with other social goods and service providers, there is need to equip graduates from library schools in Nigeria on how to advocate favorably to garner support and sympathy for libraries, both from the public and government and corporate organizations.

Basic statistics and research module is recommended to take 2%. Statistics is very important in library and information services. Library functions such as acquisitions, circulation, journal usage, library budget, service evaluation etc are subjected to statistical analysis. Statistics is also very useful in carrying out good empherical research in the field. This module will add a lot of value to Nigerian graduates from library schools and prepare them for research and manipulation of figures and data that they will need in fostering their career.

The last but not the least Library and Information Entrepreneurship module should take about 1% of the programme. This will prepare graduates to face economic realities of the country in terms of seeking for employment. It will also encourage them to be self-employed and even become employers of labor. Frustration faced by unemployed graduates could be reduced with this module and it will also give the profession respect in the Nigerian society.

Courses that could be incorporated in ICT Modules includes:

Basic computer skills, Introduction to Internet and web resources, web design and management, computer application, database structure and management, online information retrieval, networking and data communication, audio-visuals, management, Digitization of library resources, computer installation management and trouble shooting, library automation, information architecture, and recent issues in ICT application in library and information centers.

Other topics that could be incorporated into the proposed curriculum include the following

An overview of modern information technologies. Development of information technologies.

Computers, telecommunication, E-mail, Telex, Facsimile, Videotext and Teletext, Reprography and Micrographic, Audiovisual services, CD-ROM, ADONIS, Multimedia etc.

Computer, media and communication technologies applications in libraries.

On-Line services. Development of on-line information services. Components and features of an on-line database service. Functions of an on-line information services. Different on-line services. On-line information retrieval, Lib 2.0.

Library Networking: Introduction. Different networks like Information and Library Network (*INFLIBNET*), Southern African Bibliographic Information Network. (SABINET), Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) etc. Relative advantages and limitations.

INTERNET: What makes up the Internet? Its applications in library and information center.

6. Telecommunication: Modem. Microwave Gateways, Switching Systems etc.

7   CD-ROM & CD-Networking. CD-ROM drives. Networking, CD-ROM drives: Different types, advantages and limitations.

8   Multimedia perspective, Multimedia applications, requirements, Hypertext, Hypermedia and Video Conferencing.

9.   Electronic Mail: Introduction. E-Mail networks. E-mail services and service providers in Nigeria.

10.   Bar Code System and Application in library circulation: Its uses and importance.

11.   Electronic publishing: Introduction, Advantages and disadvantages. Barriers in electronic publishing.

12.   Digital libraries: Definitions, purpose, usefulness.

13. Role of Artificial Intelligence and expert systems in library and information science work.

14.   Database management system including CDS / ISIS, LIBSYS, open software etc.

15.   Methods of evaluation of an information retrieval (IR) system.

16.   Economics and marketing of information products and services.

17. Information Resource Management.

18. Information processing and organizing.

19. Operations Research.

The above topics require emphasis both on theoretical and practical aspects of LIS education. In ensuring the successful implementation of the new curriculum that will ensure that library and information professionals trained in Nigeria are 21st century compliant. The following are recommended.

There is need for the library schools to continually relate with employers of library and information professionals. This relationship will reveal to the library schools expectations of librarians in 21st century. The library school could ensure this by interacting with employers and potential employers of library and information professionals. The school in turn could draw out new curriculum based on the expectations of employers.

The library schools could also study the requirements and qualifications used for job advertisement. The study of such advertisement will reveal among other things, the job expectations, job specifications and skills needed for various advertised vacancies. The outcome of this could be used to re-design the curricula to sooth the specifications of 21st century.

There is also the need to lump some of the traditional library courses so that other relevant 21st century job relevance courses could be incorporated into the curriculum. The hours and resources used to teach these conventional courses could be used to teach the relevant courses in the 21st century. For example courses like history of library & information centers, history of writing, library and society, library administration, collection development etc. could be lumped together as foundation courses, while other new courses that are relevant to the 21st century job market could be included in the new curriculum.

There is also the need for collaboration among the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria, (LRCN) National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), and Nigerian Library Association (NLA) in re-designing of curricula of library and information science programmes in the library schools in Nigeria. The three bodies should come together and put their experiences in the new direction.

There is also the need for the harmonization of curricula of various library schools in Nigeria. This could also be achieved by NALISE, NLA and LRCN. This will bring uniformity and standardization in the training of library and information professionals in the country.

Continuing Professional Development is an essential part of modern library and information profession of the 21st century. The LIS professional, with better personal, professional and technological competencies have great opportunities and bright future in the modern libraries. The LRCN should compel LIS practitioners to be undergoing some continuing professional development courses just like they are done by other professional bodies such as ICAN. This is very important because LIS professionals of 21st century job market need to learn a great variety of professional competencies to accomplish the role of the professional librarian in the constantly changing web environment.

Nigerian library schools can also be doing "follow-up" of their products that is, they should be monitoring their products to find out how soon they get jobs after graduation. This exercise will also reveal the

kind of jobs they finally fit into and how they are performing in the job in terms of their competencies and skills. This will enable the school to know the relevance of the skills and training they will be imbibing in their products. This follow- up will serve as feedback to the schools and will enable them to fine-tune the curricula in line with realities of the 21st century job market.

The mode of training given in the library school should be practical- oriented and student centered. Students should be given chances to participate and there should be opportunities for class-room interaction. The training should also be given with appropriate technology that will make teaching and learning interesting.

Presently, most library schools in Nigeria end up turning out general practitioners who are not well groomed in any particular area in library work as against strong training in various areas of librarianship. There is therefore the need to train graduates in special fields of librarianship such as health information, publishing and book trade, knowledge management, business information, archival and record management, information management, knowledge organization, Information and Communication Technology, application and a host of others. This is being put in place in Babcock University and recently at in University of Ibadan. Other library schools in Nigeria should follow suit.

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