



## Research Paper

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# Trends and issues in library and information science curriculum in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The curriculum is the best barometer to reflect the changes and challenges we face today in Library and Information Science (LIS) education. No wonder it is one of the issues persistent in Library and Information Science Education. What should constitute the core in the LIS curriculum has always been the focus in the field. The paper looks into the trends and issues in LIS curriculum in Nigeria. It reviewed the trends and issues in LIS curriculum in Nigeria in terms of its dynamism and robustness. The study identified increased Information and Communication Technology (ICT) component in library schools curricula as the major trend in curriculum. It identified lack of content with emerging disciplines, gap between what is being taught in many LIS schools and what is being practiced in most libraries as some of the issues in ICT curriculum in Nigeria. The paper noted institutional bureaucracy, lack of usable models, inadequate funding, inadequate staffs and expertise, unreliable power supply, poor infrastructure/instructional facilities for teaching and learning poor linkages between institutions of learning at national and international levels and lack of networks with global knowledge system as some of the challenges facing the implementation of LIS curriculum. The paper recommends infrastructure/instructional development, government intervention, training the trainer and interdisciplinary approach as a way to propel LIS School to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to ensure that graduates from library schools in Nigeria are equipped with the competencies required to function effectively in the management of all categories of libraries.

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### INTRODUCTION

The development of the right curricula is a major issue in Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria today. Looking at the current trend in Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria, the question that readily comes to mind is do the present LIS curriculum meet today's reality and International standards? Does it meet the requirements of both the current and potential employers of LIS trainees and information age? Is it having enough content of emerging disciplines etc?

The field of library and information science (LIS) is undergoing immense transformation and this has affected the landscape of library and information service parlance.

These changes are brought about by ICT and the emergence of the knowledge based society. According to Sutton (2001), changes that are brought to LIS profession by ICTs can be grouped into two namely: the natural evolutionary change and transformatory changes. In the natural evolution, the library and information science profession has harnessed ICTs to perform old tasks better through the automation of housekeeping tasks such as reference work, bibliographic services, cataloguing, serials, circulation and acquisition, which are performed more efficiently in an ICT environment. Transformatory changes, on the other hand include the emergence of new functions

arising out of an expanded, demand driven information society wider and / or interdisciplinary jurisdiction and closer focus on user need.

In our contemporary society, Library and Information science programme should assist students in the development of a wide range of technical skills that will enable them function effectively in Information Age. According to Okojie and Omotoso (2013) the information age required a multi-dimension and new skill for an information professional to efficiently and effectively deliver information services. The information age is characterized by challenges of information explosion; dynamic and rapid changes in information sources and infrastructures and users' sophistication.

The nature of the information society and knowledge required to deliver quality information services by librarians makes the review of curriculum very imperative. Hence, provision of all encompassing, dynamic and robust curriculum that will meet the current need is necessary for the advancement of the education and knowledge of librarians to achieve quality information service delivery for national development.

## THE CONCEPT OF CURRICULUM

The term curriculum has been used with quite different meanings ever since the field took form. According to Julio (2014), curriculum is a Latin word, 'Currere' means 'the race, the path, lap or course or runway' which one takes to reach a goal applied to a course of study. If the teacher is the guide, the curriculum is the path. Ocholla (2003) posits that curriculum is a fundamental part of any education or training programmes 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 programme or course all of which are essential in a successful dispensation of manpower training and education.

Ajibero (2013) postulates that curriculum is the foundation of sound educational system. He stressed that our library and information science schools should create curricula that present a dynamic mix theory, tools application course and context-sensitive elective. Library and information science is a dynamic profession. Libraries and the services they provided are changing at the speed of light. Thus, it is essential that the library and information science curriculum itself is dynamic, providing graduates with knowledge and skills they will need as soon as they join the labour market.

Aina (2007) opined that curriculum must be relevant to the immediate environment, reflect the best international practices, accommodate both the traditional and potential employers, provide for all the categories of people of the society, provide for self-employment and job creation

which create room for other disciplines have direct impact

For a curriculum to be effective, it must have continuous monitoring and evaluation. It must adapt its educational activities and services to meet the needs of a modern and dynamic community. It must reflect the needs of the individual and the society as a whole. The curriculum is in proper shape in order to meet the challenges of times and make education more responsive to the clientele it serves.

The Curriculum is democratically conceived. A good curriculum is developed through the efforts of a group of individuals from different sectors in the society who are knowledgeable about the interests, needs and resources of the learner and the society as a whole. The curriculum is the product of many minds and energies.

The curriculum is a complex of details. It provides the proper instructional equipment and meeting places that are often most conducive to learning. It includes the student teacher relationship, guidance and counseling program, health services, school and community projects, library and laboratories and other school related work experiences.

Villanueva (2014) posited that curriculum must complement and cooperate with other programs of the community. The curriculum is responsive to the needs of the community. The school offers its assistance in the improvement and realization of the ongoing programs of the community. There is cooperative effort between the school and the community towards greater productivity.

A good curriculum must help the learner to become the best that he can possibly be. The curriculum has administrative flexibility. It must be ready to incorporate changes whenever necessary and must be opened to revision and development to meet the demands of globalization and the digital age.

Tabogoc (2014) is of the opinion that curriculum must be learner-centered, inclusive and developmentally appropriate, relevant, responsive and research-based, culture-sensitive, contextualized and global.

From the aforementioned, is it possible to rate LIS School curriculum as good or to what extent has it justified the criteria of a good curriculum?

## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The development of LIS education and training in Nigeria has become a main topic of discussion among LIS educators in the country and has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Aina (2007) and Ajibero (2013). Librarianship is a dynamic profession which is recognized as an occupation that requires certain performance standards, education or training. These requirements are well recognized by Nigerian libraries, hence, emphasis has been placed on education and training of librarians since the 1940's. At the initial stage,

most of the librarians managing our libraries were expatriates who lacked the understanding of the society where they worked. This was found to be inappropriate. Thus, Nigerians were sent abroad for training in librarianship. Most of the people who benefited from these training programmes took courses which led to the award of the British ALA qualification. Though, the education received by these trainees was foreign-oriented, on their return they were able to criticize the way our libraries were organized and run by the expatriates because they did not meet the Nigerian needs. The increased demand for qualified library staff brought about the call for the establishment of formal library schools in Nigeria.

The main event that led to the formation of science education is the 1953 UNESCO seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa held at the then University College, Ibadan. At the end of the seminar it was recommended, among other things the establishment of an institution for the training of librarians in Africa. Nothing practically happened until in 1957, when the Carnegie Corporation of New - York sponsored Professor Harold Lancour, the formal Dean of School of Library and Information Science, University of Pittsburgh to study the library needs of British West Africa. In order to improve library services, he recommended the immediate establishment of a library school in British West Africa. His recommendation was accepted. The Carnegie Corporation provided funds for the establishment of the first library school in West Africa in 1959 at the institutes of Librarianship, University College, Ibadan. At the initial stage, the institute offered courses leading to the award of British's Associate of Library Association (ALA), diploma (Dip. Lib.) and Fellow of Library Association (FLA). Its programmes have gone through many modifications. At present, it offers diploma, Bachelor, Masters and Ph.D. programmes and the name of the school was changed long ago to Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies.

Obviously, the institute of librarianship at Ibadan could not cope with the training of manpower needed in the library service sector. The increasing demand for trained professional librarians led to the establishment of the department of library science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1968. It started with programmes leading to the award of diploma (DLS) and Bachelor Degree (BLS).

The third library school was established in 1977 at Bayero University, Kano which commenced with a Diploma programme. Also, in 1978, the Department of Library Science, University of Maiduguri was established. In the 80's, 90's and 2000's several library schools were established in quick succession in University, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

Today, the inadequacy of LIS training school has become a non-issue. The emphasis now is the development of the right curriculum. A curriculum that meet the followings:

1) Today's reality;

2) International standards;

3) The requirements of both the current and potential employers of LIS trainees;

4) The requirement of information age;

5) Having enough content of emerging disciplines.

According to Aina (2007), a curriculum must be in tandem with the requirements of both the current and potential employers of LIS trainees. The curriculum must be relevant to the immediate environment, it must, in addition, reflect the best international practices. Robust curriculum is *sine qua non* to propel LIS School to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to ensure that graduates from library schools in Nigeria are equipped with the competencies required to function effectively in the management of all categories of libraries.

Al-Suqri (2010) noted that LIS education is becoming highly competitive requiring the latest technology and teaching methods. Without robust curriculum LIS departments are unlikely to be able to keep up with these developments.

Among all the changes that occurred in LIS education, the ones that are most visible and observable can be found in the LIS curricula. That is, the curriculum for LIS education usually mirrors what is being offered to train librarians and information professionals' knowledge and skills to become qualified personnels in the field, but also meet challenges the ever changing information society brings (Chu, 2006). This new trend and development worldwide poses a great challenge for library and information science education in Nigeria. One of these challenges which is a major issue in library schools in Nigeria are contending with outdated / changing curricula. There is the need for constant review of LIS curriculum towards preparing library and information science schools in Nigeria for the emerging global society. The relevance and viability of library and information science education in Nigeria requires looking at both the access to and quality in new ways to enhancing the quality of products turned out from the universities into the labour market.

The library and information science education curriculum in Nigeria affects the graduates of library and information science in Nigeria with respect to the labor market of this age of digitalization. According to Singh (2006) librarianship today has arrived at the information age where librarian will have to act as a facilitator, advisor, consultant, instructor, navigator, searcher, researcher, evaluator, organizer, preserver, promoter, communicator, technical expert, as well as, a manager, leader, entrepreneur and visionary.

Library Information Science Education in Nigeria today cannot be relevant without effective preparation of new generation of librarians to effectively use the new information and communication technology in their professional practices. The curriculum of LIS has to be such that can empower the student to unleash their

potential as they endeavour to offer relevant and efficient services within the current levels of technological sophistication.

As against the widely held belief that the library is usually the traditional environment for information professionals, information technology has come to challenge that position by introducing new dimensions to the field and its operations. A lot of changes have come to affect and shape the present library environments. Such changes have necessitated the re-appraisal of library education and training in all its ramifications.

The implications of the foregoing led to a situation whereby changes in the current curricular of library schools become imperative. More importantly, future curricular are expected to be constructed in such manners as to accommodate programmes that will equip graduates professional with the knowledge, skill and techniques to acquire, organize and disseminate information according to the new demands in the information markets.

### **TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA**

The general trend observed in Library and Information Science curriculum in Nigeria increased ICT component in library schools curricula. According to Ekoja (2011), the library schools in Nigeria have attuned their curricula towards modern realities. One way of doing this is to have adequate ICT content in all the library schools' curricula. This is aimed at producing graduates with ICT skills and competencies that can serve satisfactorily in today's ICT-driven library environment. ICT skills and competencies are not just taught theoretically in some schools but in most of them there exist computer and Internet laboratories where the students have hands-on experience.

The study conducted by Otong and Otong (2013) and Abubakar (2010) on the curriculum of Library and Information Science (LIS) programmes in some universities in Nigeria confirmed the inclusion of ICTs in Nigerian library school's curriculum but were also put to good use from time to time.

These digital age scenarios have set the scene for changes for Nigerian Library and Information Science schools. The LIS curriculum development in Nigeria has shown considerable strides in infusing ICT competencies as most LIS schools have developed relevant ICT courses and also merged relevant ICT knowledge in traditional curriculum.

The admiration of ICTs by LIS Schools in Nigeria shows that it is in tune with global trend in LIS education and training. Gorman (2004) buttressed this by asserting that many library educations have been enticed by the lure of modern communication technology and to concentrate on that technology and to dismiss areas of librarianship that

do not fit within these technological boundaries. The "lure of modern communication technology" has taken a large role in LIS education. This assertion is been confirmed in the statement of Minishi (2007) looking at the sub-Saharan, that the LIS school curriculum development has shown considerable strides in infusing ICT competence as most LIS schools have developed relevant ICT modules and / or merged relevant ICT knowledge in traditional modules. However, most LIS schools teach these modules theoretically because they have inadequate quantities and quality of computers and poor internet access.

A survey by Liu (2004) analyzed course syllabi relating to education for digital libraries in North America, Europe and Asia and found that courses offered on this subject have drastically increased over the past years.

Looking at LIS curriculum in Nigeria, the following loopholes were identified.

#### **The gap between theory and practice**

Gorman (2004) takes another step with his argument to say that "the gap between what is being taught in many LIS schools and what is being practiced in most libraries is wide and widening." Johnson et al. (2001) also identified some type of mismatch between employment expectations and library schools priorities when considering results of surveys of library schools in the Caribbean and Latin America - although it was found that the library schools seemed to be meeting the employers' key requirements.

Ocholla (2003) observes that the LIS job market requires additional and new competencies such as computer literacy, word processing, spreadsheets, database construction and management, online searching and retrieval and CD-ROM services. Others include electronic current awareness service, automatic indexing and abstracting, text digitization, desktop publishing, electronic publishing, library automation systems, telecommunications, selection of software and hardware, home page design and administration, facsimile transmission and archiving of audio visual and electronic documents. It is unfortunate that most LIS curriculum in Nigeria did not integrate majority of the courses or competencies highlighted by Ocholla (2003) which made the job market in Nigeria unattractive to the practitioners.

Although the LIS curriculum development in Nigeria has shown considerable strides in infusing ICT competencies as most LIS schools have developed relevant ICT courses and also merged relevant ICT knowledge in traditional curriculum. However, most LIS schools teach these ICT courses theoretically because they have inadequate laboratories of computers and poor Internet access.

#### **Lack of uniform or harmonized curriculum**

Oparah (2006) observed that until 1999; there was no

uniform or harmonized curriculum for Nigerian University Library and information science schools. Each operated its own curriculum. According to him, the newer LIS schools appear to operate modified curricula of the older schools. Also, observation revealed that, the LIS curricular are harmonized neither across the institutional background nor even within individual departments. Thus, within the universities, it is not unusual to find great diversity of offerings among the LIS schools. Each school attempts to offer what they believe to be key competencies for their graduates.

A review of the curricula of these schools shows that while some emphasize more library science courses, others strive to strike a balance between library science and information.

From the various literature searches, it is obvious that there are serious concerns for the curricula of library and information science education to meet the present digital society with respect to library and information service. In this vein, the library and information science curricula in Nigeria has been revisited and reviewed by the various bodies concern.

### **Inadequate application of ICTs**

In spite of the fact that the curricula of Nigeria University Library and information science schools are reasonably adequate in the provision of ICT courses, there are many issues with LIS curriculum. According to Oparah (2006), the contents of library and information science curricula are generally lacking in the application of ICT. The content of each course does not include enough application of ICT to its peculiar services. The practical emphasis is also not enough.

Another issue identified by Ikoja (2006) is that there is a gap between the competencies that LIS education provides and those required by the job market today. It is a challenge for current LIS curricula to meet the expectations of stakeholders (Beukes, 2006).

### **Lack of competent staffs**

LIS schools often lack academics that can champion and dynamically develop some ICT programmes, subjects or even modules such as Operating systems, Applications software, Hardware and Software selection, LANs and Intranets, Internet Facilities and Internet Tools. What is taught in the aforementioned modules does not always translate into comparable knowledge and competencies.

In Nigeria, researchers has shown that the adoption of technology in LIS schools and libraries is very slow until today, personal computers which became cheaper and more affordable are still inadequate in most of the library operations (Manir, 2007).

### **Inadequate content with emerging disciplines**

In addition, most of the library school curriculum lack content with emerging disciplines such as expertise in knowledge management, ICT/multi-media applications in data/information management, transfer and delivery. Good knowledge of management theories and practices information brokerage and advocacy etc. According to Jain (2006), LIS schools in Nigeria should have content with emerging disciplines such as knowledge management and information system, which will offer positively new benefits to emerging grandaunts.

Diso and Njoku (2007) and Diso (2007) indicated that from the courses that are offered in the LIS schools in Nigeria, it can be conspicuously seen that ICTs integration in the LIS curriculum in Nigeria is still at its infant stage where majority of the LIS schools have no competencies in teaching these courses.

### **Inadequate emphasis on post-industrial information and communication technologies**

It is also clear that most of the courses offered in some LIS schools in Nigeria place high emphasis on print-orientation and print-media with very little on post-industrial information and communication technologies (ICTs) (computers, automated systems, internet connectivity, online services and micro-media, etc). Even where such non-print courses exist in the curricula, they only constitute a marginal component with little or no practical cultural value.

### **Low coverage of LIS curriculum in Nigeria**

LIS curriculum in Nigeria does not provide enough for all the categories of people of the society. The consumer of library science profession is the whole society, regardless of status, gender and literacy levels. The literacy rate in the rural communities is very low, yet, the curriculum of library science in Nigeria is based majorly on the printed word. The implication of this is that the majority of people in Nigeria are neglected, as the graduants are not adequately taught on how to render information services to the illiterate.

### **CONSTRAINTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LIS CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA**

There are a number of constraints to the implementation of curriculum. Some of the challenges hindering the curriculum from producing the needed results are:

- 1) Institutional bureaucracy;

- 2) Lack of usable models;
- 3) Inadequate funding;
- 4) Inadequate staffs and expertise;
- 5) Unreliable Power supply is a major constraint in implementation of LIS curriculum in Nigeria. ICTs are electricity driven. Irregular public power supply means that ICT facilities cannot be used for instruction whenever there is power failure;
- 6) Poor infrastructures/ instructional facilities for teaching and learning;
- 7) Lack of or absence of collaboration or linkages between institutions of learning at national and international levels;
- 8) Lack of Networks with global knowledge system;
- 9) Lack of clear policy formulation and implementation with regards to educational development;
- 10) Lack of qualitative and adequate research output.
- 11) Poor Governmental support to LIS schools.
- 12) Inadequacy of reliable infrastructure that will support the full incorporation of IT in the LIS schools.
- 13) Lack of regular and continuous review of LIS curriculum in most Nigerian LIS Schools.
- 14) Inadequate IT literate LIS educators in the country;
- 15) Non-challant attitude of the Library Associations to LIS education in Nigeria. The various professional associations especially the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) has not shown enough commitment to the issue of LIS education in the country.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the challenges identified, the following recommendations were made:

### Designing of a robust and all-encompassing curriculum

The adequacy and appropriateness of the present curricula should be examined. It is necessary to restructure and remodel the curricula to suit the present times. LIS departments should restructure their curriculum and incorporate changes taking place in information environment.

The LIS curriculum requires continuous updating to fit the contemporary age expectations. This should be in addition to the upgrading of their teaching, learning and research resources/facilities to enhance the theoretical and practical competence of their products. Library trainees should be exposed to an appropriate curriculum that would provide the society the required skills needed.

Also, a curriculum must provide for self-employment and job creation and must accommodate other disciplines that have direct impact on library science.

### Inter-disciplinary approach

LIS is inherently multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary

and knowledge and experience from other disciplines are needed to provide quality LIS education. Sociology and psychology would help us become more knowledgeable about the kinds of information and services our users desire to have while Computer science would enable us to take full advantage of technologies in educating LIS professionals. The best innovation happens when you put people from different disciplines and backgrounds together.

Library school should diversify their portfolio of courses by offering courses that deal with current issues, publishing and communication industries, management courses, operation and management of telecommunications, computer networks, a professional philosophy and ethic of service; human behaviour (behavioural science) in terms of information seeking and social interaction information transfer process on how information and knowledge is created, organized, disseminated, diffused, utilized, preserved and destroyed; knowledge of management theory to enable graduates to assume leadership of an information agency and knowledge of the global information infrastructure as it interfaces with local, regional, national and international networks.

In managing the challenge of complex and diverse new environment, LIS should collaborate with different disciplines like information management and technology, information studies and mass communications.

LIS schools should make a thorough continuous revision and development of course programmes and also introduce new courses to meet the needs of employers in industries and the public and private sectors.

### Government intervention

The Government of Nigeria should come forward through her agents to provide financial help to the LIS schools for developing essential infrastructures to provide hands on experience to the students.

### Train the trainer

The teachers handling the training of the students in Nigerian library schools need to be re-trained in modern theory and practice of information if they are to meet with the demand of the society and the Nigerian labour market. Given the pace of change in the nature of library and information services, library trainers should be committed to lifelong learning because the circumstances are demanding greater professional and technical awareness. Karisiddappa (2004) observed that as professional obsolescence becomes a real and ever present danger, only a systematic continuing education provides a method of combating such obsolescence.

## Role of associations

More commitment is required on the part of NLA and NALISE to LIS education. The two associations need to come up with a common stand and speak with one voice. They should also realize that LIS education in Nigeria is expected to be in line with the current global trends where the issue of IT has become a central phenomenon

## Infrastructure Development

The laboratories should be provided with attendants who would in essence ensure that the laboratories are kept open for students use both during lectures and students free hours. This will give the students a lot of opportunities to acquire more skills in ICT.

Practical activities should be incorporated into teaching/learning activities through the allocation of hours for practical sessions in the Departments Lecture Time Table. This will fundamentally expose students on knowledge and skills of the ICT equipment.

Students should be encouraged to register for more ICT related courses and to take computer training outside the regular classroom. This will help bridge the lost opportunity they could not utilize while at school.

## All- inclusive Curriculum

LIS curriculum must take into account the immediate needs of the Nigerian society, as well as, the best international practices. The needs of the society must be paramount to curriculum. Fortunately, the consumer of library science profession is the whole society, regardless of status, gender and literacy levels. LIS curriculum must provide for all the categories of people of the society both the literate and non- literate members of the society

## CONCLUSION

The issue of LIS curriculum needs to be properly addressed in Nigeria. As stated earlier that the developments that were experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have provide changes and shifts that define the changing landscape and competencies expected of the Library and Information professionals of the future. In view of the emerging network environment, the fundamental shift in the goals of the library and the changes in information storage and delivery mechanisms, the curriculum should cater to the needs of these changes by including in their course contents the knowledge and skills required to function effectively in such an environment. LIS curricula must be overhauled drastically if we want to retain our identity in a rapidly developing information society.

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