



ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: IMPERATIVES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Sustaining earlier calls by scholars for the expansion of the Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum, this paper advocates the integration of entrepreneurship training into LIS education programme in Nigeria. It argues that the nature of the traditional job market, which imposes limitations on access to jobs by LIS graduates, makes alternative job outlets imperative. Possible branch-out areas are publishing and printing, bookselling, information consultancy/brokerage, web designing and Internet service provision in cyber cafes, among others. Entrepreneurship training will prepare students to venture into these areas upon graduation and succeed. Besides, it will enhance the professional status of the library and information profession and boost efficiency in traditional library service delivery. Ways of domesticating entrepreneurship training in LIS education are suggested as follows; integration into the curriculum, collaboration with external experts, through the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), and through continuing education.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Library and Information Science Education; Curriculum Expansion; Library Job Market; Alternative Jobs.

Introduction

When the Chicago library school was opened in 1926, it took a radical departure from the norm as its team of lecturers was composed of persons from disciplines other than librarianship (Nasiri, 1974). This, rather strange step, naturally evoked criticism and resentment from hardcore librarians and library educators who must have seen the Chicago library school as a caricature of library education. What new philosophy of library education was the Chicago library school projecting? A clue comes from a comment made by Wilson (1949), to the effect that the Chicago style helped “jar the profession out of the prolonged devotion to the practical techniques set up by Dewey”. In other words, the Chicago library school recognized the narrow knowledge base to which the librarian-in-training was exposed and felt the need for expansion. It must have occurred to the school that the profession would benefit from an eclectic approach which brought ideas from several disciplines such as Sociology, Psychology, Education and History to enrich Library Science. Hence its faculty was drawn from these disciplines.



The idea of library education for library work has pervaded professional thinking and has influenced the design of the curriculum from inception. But the dramatic step of the Chicago library school challenging the restrictive curriculum of Library Science set the stage for several calls for expansion of the knowledge base of the library school along the line of history. Some of these calls favour the introduction of courses that have immediate utilitarian value for the student even outside the institutionalized library. In an obvious frontal attack on the educational programme for librarians prevalent in his time, Taylor (1979) asserts; “to educate the librarians to think only in terms of a place called library as we currently know that institution is to do them a disservice and probably doom them to ineffectuality”. In league with Taylor, Ochogwu (1995) remarks as follows:

...Professional training of librarians for information work in Nigeria should be viewed from a very broad perspective instead of the parochial orientation to work in library institutions only. This implies that Library Science students while undergoing professional training should be given a broad-based knowledge not only in the academic subjects but in non-traditional courses in librarianship. This will enable the graduate work in a variety of organizations dealing with the processing and dissemination of information.

Aina (2007) goes beyond the recognition of the need to diversify the curriculum of Library and Information Science (LIS) education to actually preparing a “proposed LIS curriculum for Library and Information Science schools in Nigeria”. His draft proposal is a four-year programme, which integrates traditional Library Science courses with non-traditional ones to give the product a competitive advantage in the job market.

This paper associates with these propositions for an extended span of knowledge base for LIS, arguing that entrepreneurship should constitute a part of the knowledge base of LIS education in Nigeria in view of its practical value. An entrepreneur has been defined as “one who creates a new business in the face of risk and uncertainty for the purpose of achieving profit and growth by identifying significant opportunities and assembling the necessary resources to capitalize on them” (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 2005:4). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, entrepreneurship shall refer to the courageous utilization of resources such as finance, energy and time by an individual to create wealth by meeting identified human needs. Entrepreneurship Training in Library and Information Science education means inculcating entrepreneurial principles to students undergoing a programme of education in Library and Information Science. This sort of training will excite the consciousness of LIS students to a possibility of gainful professional career in the private sector upon graduation. The paper is done in three segments; the first adduces justification for entrepreneurship training in LIS, the second identifies parts of the profession that lend themselves to commercialization, while the last segment suggests ways of enshrining entrepreneurship training in the education programme of LIS schools.

Justification for Entrepreneurship Training

The necessity for entrepreneurship training in Library and Information Science education is underscored by the following reasons:



1. To prepare LIS graduates for a diversified job market. The imperative of a diversified job market owes to the nature of traditional library job market, which imposes limitations on access to jobs by librarians. Three dimensions of the nature of library job market are hereby identified and discussed.

First, it has a limited scope. Its scope is too narrow to absorb all the products of LIS schools. Presently, there is no regulation by the professional body in Nigeria on the number of students to be admitted into the LIS schools. Therefore the LIS schools, numbering twenty in the Nigerian universities admit students according to their carrying capacities as approved by the National Universities Commission, with some exceeding theirs. The result is the ever swelling number of librarians, as yearly, LIS schools turn out graduates as qualified librarians. The job spaces in the libraries are inadequate to absorb all the library school graduates. There were a total of 7,237 undergraduate students in twenty LIS schools in Nigeria in the 2010/2011 academic session (Nwosu, 2011). This means an average annual turnout of 1,809 librarians from these LIS schools for four years beginning at the end of the 2010/2011 session. This figure, it must be noted, is exclusive of the number of those whose first professional qualification is the Master of Library Science.

Yet, it is enough indication that the production level of the LIS schools in Nigeria is quite high. There are 1,032 libraries in Nigeria as the entries in the current National Library of Nigeria (2011), *Mailing List of Libraries in Nigeria* suggests. It is certain that the absorption capacity of these libraries is not infinitely elastic. We can therefore infer that there is a surfeit of librarians in the traditional library job market in Nigeria. The desire of Adimorah, (2002) is that graduates of LIS schools should be able to create employment instead of seeking employment.

Next, it is government controlled. Library jobs fall into the public sector domain and characteristic of the public sector, government policies and regulations are overriding. Therefore, government restrictions or total ban on employment imposes a barrier on engagement of qualified librarians in the libraries, even when there are vacancies. The poor staff syndrome in our libraries is symptomatic of the prevalence of such government fiscal measures. The public libraries are usually worse hit. For example, in Imo State Nigeria, an embargo on employment placed during the military regime was in force until 2010 when the civilian government in power announced a lift and instituted a process of offering ten thousand jobs to youths in the State public service (Obi, 2010). While the embargo lasted, the public library in Imo State suffered severe staff shortage as it had no free hand to recruit staff according to the needs of the library; vacancies created by staff who left for greener pastures or retired remained unfilled.

Besides, the traditional library job market is insensitive to the individuality of librarians. A mono job market for all librarians fails to recognize the personal preferences of individual librarians. There are certain individuals who have trained as librarians but who may not be attracted to a job in the traditional library environment. The serene atmosphere and a job that is largely routine may not be appealing to them. In the mono market system, such people will either accept a job in the library and be condemned to a career life time of drudgery, or they decline from the profession, but, equipped with the right skills, such people can still pursue a career in the information profession as private practitioners. Thus, it is evident that a paradigm shift from a mono job market in the traditional library set up to a multi job market for librarians is imperative. Since the alternative job areas are largely in the private sector, there is great need to

equip trainees in LIS schools with entrepreneurial skills for them to succeed. Thus, a key compelling factor for the inclusion of entrepreneurship training in LIS education is the need to prepare the products for a plural job market.

2. To boost professional status. The library and information profession is still evolving in Nigeria. It is yet to receive the same level of recognition as the older professions such as Medicine, Law and Engineering from the society. These professions earn their respect by being in touch with the people; as these practitioners render professional services for fees, the people are poised to appreciate the relevance of these professions in their personal lives. Altruism, one of Abraham Flexner's characteristics of a profession, is exhibited in their professional practice to the satisfaction of the people and hence their approval.

When as entrepreneurs, LIS graduates begin to own information outfits in the society making comparable impact on the people with those of other professions, the societal recognition of the professional status of the library and information profession will be enhanced. The librarian in the traditional setting, can and should exhibit altruism in service delivery, but the librarian-entrepreneur whose watchword is "customer satisfaction" is better suited to exhibit altruistic qualities, which will endear him to the people and ultimately boost professional recognition. Therefore, the library and information profession needs entrepreneurship to project her professional status. LIS schools should recognize this need and take measures to groom men and women for entrepreneurship.

Aina (2007) lends credence to the proposition that entrepreneurship will bolster the professional status of library and information when he comments as follows:

A profession will be respected in a society, if there is assurance that trainees in the profession would easily find jobs after graduation. However, a profession will go into oblivion, if after graduation, its graduates are unable to secure employment in the private and public sectors or they are unable to create self employment... this is why many professions ensure that their trainees are exposed to an appropriate curriculum that would provide the society the required skills.

3. To promote efficiency in the library. Traditional library services can be improved upon with an infusion of entrepreneurial ideas. Riddle (2003) affirms that librarians can adopt techniques and tools in the business sector to improve library efficiency while not compromising their public service mission. He argues further: "... businesses know how to manage, and much can be learned from business for the much improved efficiency of library operations. The successful 21st century librarian will know this and seek out proven management strategies and tools" (Riddle, 2003:132).

The traditional library remains the anchor base of the library and information profession and therefore whatever tends to the improvement of its operational efficiency must not only be encouraged but vigorously pursued. Entrepreneurial skills acquired in the LIS school will help the library manager become effective. Through entrepreneurship training, the librarian imbibes the entrepreneur's principle of "customer satisfaction" which drives altruism in service delivery.



4. To demonstrate conformity with government policy. Concerned over the spate of unemployment among the teeming graduates of Nigerian universities, the Nigerian government, acting through the National Universities Commission (NUC) has, since 2007, introduced the entrepreneurship education policy in Nigerian universities to prepare students to set up private businesses after graduation (The Nigerian Voice, 2010). Hence, entrepreneurship is now taught as a compulsory General Studies (GST) course for undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Embroidering the Library and Information Science programme with entrepreneurship will project it congruent with government policy in this regard.

In the light of the discussion above, it is imperative that entrepreneurship training become institutionalized in the programme of Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria. The next segment of the paper will try to identify aspects of the library and information profession suited for entrepreneurship.

Integrals of Library and Information Profession Amenable to Entrepreneurship

The perennial anxiety of the LIS student revolves around job opportunities upon graduation. The constriction in the library job market is rather obvious to him, but hardly does he know how else to apply his professional knowledge to make a living. However, this question of alternative uses of LIS education has been effectively addressed by Agumanu (1995), Fasanya (1995) and Ochogwu (1995), among others. Agumanu (1995) provides an array of possible areas of engagement for the LIS graduate such as freelance information management, independent business research and information brokerage, records management, indexing and index publishing, and bookstore ownership. Fasanya (1995) identifies bookselling, publishing, literary agency, audiovisual materials/equipment sales and consultancy, and computer programming as areas where appropriate LIS training can fetch a job.

Similarly, Ochogwu (1995) identifies publishing, bookselling, information consultancy, data base management, and information brokerage as alternative career routes for the LIS graduate. In a related contribution, Adimorah (2002) writes, “we need to produce graduates who can become information consultants, information brokers, library consultants and entrepreneurs in the information market”. Thus, information brokerage and consultancy, publishing and the book trade, audiovisual materials sales and library equipment supply are integrals of the library and information profession where entrepreneurship can be exercised.

In addition to these, developments in ICT have opened new opportunities for information professionals, as web designers and cyber café managers, providing internet services. The foregoing shows that the library and information profession does not start and end in the library; rather, veritable aspects of it can be practiced in the private sector. An adequate programme is required to prepare LIS graduates to explore varied job options. Necessarily, entrepreneurship should be a component of such a programme in order to furnish the complementary entrepreneurial skills for private sector success. In what follows, the paper will discuss possible approaches to domesticating entrepreneurship training in LIS education.

Strategies for Entrepreneurship in LIS Education

The following measures can be taken to enshrine entrepreneurship training in LIS education.



1. Integrating entrepreneurship into the LIS curriculum. As the 21st century approaches, and especially in view of the revolutionary developments in ICT, several calls began to be made for the revision of LIS schools' curricula. In fact, the 2002 national conference of the National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE) had the theme, "Modernization of Library and Information Science Curriculum". Adducing reasons for modernizing LIS curriculum in Nigeria, the lead paper presenter at the conference, Adimorah (2002) stated, "Training for entrepreneurship is another reason why we must take a second look at our curriculum". Although individual LIS schools have reviewed their curricula according to their preferences, there is need for a professionally developed and harmonized curriculum in Nigeria, which will take care of identified areas of common need. Fortunately, from the fertile brain of Aina (2007) comes a draft curriculum proposal for possible adoption by the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). This writer is of the opinion that Aina's proposal is rich and quite encompassing, and, with some adjustments, should be adopted. From the perspective of this paper, The said curriculum is commendable for providing for entrepreneurship. However, the 2-unit lone slot assigned to it appears inadequate and should be reviewed upward. The absence of entrepreneurship in the programmes of most LIS schools is a lacuna in LIS education requiring urgent steps to close up.

2. Collaboration with external experts. Collaboration is not a new phenomenon in university education. The understanding of the gains of interdisciplinary approach to studies has prompted the use of scholars in one area to service courses in another area. LIS schools can outsource the teaching of entrepreneurship courses from the business faculty in the university or consultancy firms outside. This is because scarcity of human resources with the enabling knowledge and skill to adequately impart entrepreneurship learning to students is foreseeable in LIS schools at present. However, it should be a stop-gap measure while awaiting home-grown experts.

3. In-house development of entrepreneurship programme. Some LIS educators can direct their research interests to this area and develop it in tandem with the needs of the profession. This is the ideal that every LIS school should strive to achieve. The use of external experts to teach entrepreneurship in the LIS department raises the issues of commitment and cost. In a scenario where the service lecturers are drawn from another faculty in the university, there is a possibility that these lecturers will feel shortchanged as this additional load is usually not officially compensated for. This will definitely affect their commitment to the programme as they will lack the motivation to teach it effectively. Where this is the case, the students will hardly benefit from the programme. But, when some lecturers in the LIS department who have developed themselves along this line begin to teach entrepreneurship to their own students, the commitment expectation from them will at least, be at par with other courses. Moreover, being insiders, they are expected to customize the programme to LIS. In effect, definitions and illustrative cases will be apt to LIS.

In another scenario where the service provider is a consultancy firm, the question of cost comes in focus. Consultancy firms render their services for fees. So, only a sustainable source of fund for prompt payment of the service provider can retain his services to the department. The department is therefore tasked to source for fund. Are the students going to constitute a source? If so, will the programme be optional for only those who can afford to pay? This approach will



negate the entire essence of the programme. Will the university undertake to pay in the face of avowed budgetary deficits? The solution to the headache of fund sourcing lies in the development of a crop of LIS educators with a bias in entrepreneurship to teach it in the department at no extra cost.

4. Through SIWES. Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) can serve as a source of acquisition of entrepreneurial skills with proper student placement and monitoring. Making a case for 'Option B' in which he proposes the placement of students in non-traditional library settings for SIWES, Nwalo (2009) writes;

The future librarian needs to be trained to fit into a variety of information service institutions. He should as well be prepared for entrepreneurship in information services. Such entrepreneurship skills are most likely to be developed during SIWES.

Hence, students could be placed in bookshops, printing and publishing houses, cyber cafes and other information service venues that are available for SIWES. While on the programme, such students would understudy the business and acquire entrepreneurial skills.

5. Continuing education. Continuing education programmes such as conferences, seminars, workshops and short courses can be veritable outlets to transmit entrepreneurship knowledge to already qualified librarians. LIS schools can organize short courses during the long vacation for graduates of LIS, whether working or not. The NL can devote one of its annual conference themes to entrepreneurship in the library and information profession. Similarly, the various Sections of the NLA can organize seminars and workshops on the subject for the benefit of their members. Care must be taken to ensure that the modules for such short courses, seminars and workshops are richly stuffed. They should cover issues such as the theoretical formulations for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship in library and information profession, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, loan sources and management, challenges and opportunities. LIS professionals can also take advantage of the less formal means of continuing education such as networking, tele-conferencing, email listservs and personal reading to keep informed on the subject of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Until recently, the known market outlet for the holder of the LIS certificate was the institutionalized library. It is increasingly being realized that openings exist in the private sector for the LIS graduate. Therefore, the programme of education for the LIS schools should increase its span of coverage to accommodate basic computer skills, computer applications (word processing, spread sheet, database management systems) networking, Internet surfing and web design, publishing, public relations, editing, writing, advocacy, conservation and preservation, theories of archives and records management (Aina, 2007). The knowledge and skills furnished through these courses would be invaluable to the graduate as he ventures into the alternative job market. However, success in these new job outlets will require adequate knowledge of entrepreneurship. It is therefore incumbent on LIS schools to equip their trainees with the salient entrepreneurial skills that can enable them make the most in the competitive world of business.



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