Addressing Contending Issues and Embracing Emerging Trends in Library and Information Science Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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*Abstract***:** The emergence of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was largely attributed to the inability of many nations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This paper identifies unresolved contending issues in Library and Information Science (LIS) education and training in Nigeria, with case for embracing emerging trends, not only for sustainability of LIS schools, but also to contribute positively towards actualization of the SDGs. With specific references to polytechnic-based and university-based LIS schools, the contending issues range from nomenclature, curriculum, infrastructure and human resources. In polytechnic-based LIS schools, many courses need to be merged so as to create avenue for integration of contemporary courses; and possibly develop specializations such as information resources management, knowledge management, records and information management, and publishing and multimedia technologies at the Higher National Diploma (HND) level. For university-based LIS schools, the development of a new programme tagged 'BSc. Information Science and Media Studies' by the National Universities Commission (NUC) with curriculum that reflects information management and multimedia technology, may or may not be a threat to LIS education; however, rebranding and repackaging LIS to Information and Knowledge Management in line with global best practices is a way forward. In addition, a case for Master of Knowledge Management (MKM) programme in universities was made in order to address emerging opportunities. The paper concludes that these contending

issues need to be addressed, emerging trends embraced, and university-based LIS schools in Nigeria should work towards ensuring that future master degree holders (MLIS graduates) possess practical computing skills in areas of programming, web design, content development, and library management systems.

Introduction

The inability of many countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa like Nigeria, to actualize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, contributed to the emergence of another development agenda, tagged the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, billed to be achieved by 2030, looks at issues of halting poverty and hunger, enabling good health and well being, providing quality education, ensuring gender equality, providing clean water and sanitation, providing affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, developing industries, innovation and infrastructure, to reducing inequalities. Others are sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water and life on land, peace and justice, strong institutions as well as partnership for the goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). There is no doubt that these development goals are laudable ideas; and since books, information and libraries are triangular instruments of societal development (Nwokocha, 2017), their roles towards the actualization of the development goals will be feasible to all and sundry in all sectors of the society. Thus, availability, accessibility and utilization of information and knowledge, of various kinds, as provided by libraries and related information agencies will be making significant impact and contributions in all areas of the development goals. This is because there is no sector or aspect of human endeavour that does not require information and knowledge for thorough planning, decision making and implementation.

It is also expected that Library and Information Science (LIS) education and training should contribute positively in achieving the SDGs. However, the present structure and pattern of education and training in library/information schools in Nigeria may not fulfill the expectations. This is attributed to various contending issues that are yet to be holistically addressed in educating and training library and information practitioners in Nigeria. From observation, these issues range from nomenclature, curriculum, course contents, contemporary programmes, infrastructure and human resources. Unfortunately, many library/information schools in the country are still using outdated curriculum for BLS/BLIS and MLS/MLIS programmes; and are even acting as if information and communication technologies (ICTs) and other digital-related factors are not influencing their pattern of education and training, as well as the future prospects of their graduates. It is obvious that 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, 2009, cited in Simisaye, 2014). Thus, Aina (2014) raised an alarm that, if care is not taken, the current practice of librarianship in Nigeria is a journey towards extinction of the profession in the country; and this is attributed to various factors, especially outdated curriculum, pattern of education and training, as well as absence of creative and innovative information service delivery by librarians. Addressing these issues will result to embracing emerging trends, which are instruments for not only sustainability of LIS schools, but also for the actualization of SDGs in the country.

The Contending Issues in LIS Education and Training
The various contending issues in the education and training programme of library/information schools in Nigeria include nomenclature crisis, curriculum, course contents, contemporary programmes, infrastructure and human resources. In his inaugural lecture, Nwokocha (2017) recommends that LIS schools in Nigeria should go for a uniform name, which is Department of Library and Information Science (DLIS); and that all universities in Nigeria should work towards establishing a Faculty of Library, Communication and Information Technology, with degree programmes in LIS, mass communication, publishing, computer science and other related disciplines. Although majority of Nigerian librarians, both practicing and educators are products of the same nomenclature, with some minor variations. However, things are fast changing in the society, thereby

demanding for periodic modifications in line with the emerging trends. For instance, a school of thought sees the word 'library' as having negative connotation in for-profit environment; that name change tells the potential student that the multidisciplinary field is information-based, and not limited to librarianship, of which graduates can work anywhere, whether in library, corporate setting or government establishments (Crowley, 1998, cited in Mutula, 2013), as well as possess the requisite skills and competences to create, run and manage information-based enterprises (i.e. infopreneurship).

As it is today, the word 'library' is no longer attracting secondary school leavers to study LIS in Nigeria. This is a fact, a hard truth, but one that some librarians, if not many, will disagree with. LIS educators will attest to the fact that prospective undergraduate students hardly choose LIS as a course of study, rather LIS departments in universities and polytechnics serve as dumping ground for students that failed to secure admission in other 'so-called juicy' disciplines. This is largely attributed to nomenclature. Not only that, the poor state of libraries in our society, especially public and school libraries, where available, sends a disappointing signal to prospective students that the study of 'library' may endanger their future and retard chances of becoming successful individuals.

Thus, in this 21st century cum knowledge economy, entrepreneurship education is now the driving force of all learning programmes in higher education institutions. Unfortunately, 'library' is not seen as being entrepreneurial in nature, rather its

products, which are 'information and knowledge', are now factors of production, forerunners of entrepreneurship, and drivers of infopreneurship in knowledge economies, as well as critical strategic resources that facilitate sustainable competitive advantage in organizations. Therefore, as Ocholla (2011) posits, enabling information and knowledge sharing should be LIS's primary activity in this digital era. This is because sharing and using these information and knowledge products have been found to be more effective ways of managing organizations, governments and businesses (Sousa, 2014; Aliyu & Dawha, 2015; Chiu & Chien, 2015).

As argued by Aina (2013), information and knowledge are best managed by librarians. Thus, access to constant information and knowledge is desirable given the fact that it will accelerate innovation and creativity, thereby promoting development. Therefore, the study and practice of information and knowledge management should be given adequate attention by the librarians, especially LIS educators, or else practitioners in other information-related professions/fields may take it away from them.

Furthermore, in our present library/information schools in Nigeria, are we actually educating and training students for the practice of information science? We doubt. Williams (1988) notes that information science brings together and uses the theories, principles, techniques and technologies of a variety of disciplines, like computer science, psychology, cognitive science, mathematics, communications, linguistics, library

science, and management science; and they are brought to bear in solving the problems with information generation, organization, representation, processing, distribution, communication and use. Thus, information science in the present era is purely computing, which involves sophisticated practical skills in programming, systems analysis and design, database management, web designs and digital content development, which are lacking in many library/information schools in the country. Rather, what many are actually teaching in most library/information schools in Nigeria is theoretically-based information management, without practical components and hands-on-practices on the part of trainees, which is applicable to all types of libraries, information centres of corporate organizations, as well as library/information and documentation divisions of ministries, departments and agencies of government.

Embracing Emerging Trends in LIS Schools of Polytechnics and Universities

The case for embracing the emerging trends will be looked at from the angle of present issues surrounding education and training system of the two classes of LIS schools in Nigeria, i.e. the polytechnic-based library/information schools and the university-based library/information schools, with their respective suggestions.

Polytechnic-based LIS Schools: Polytechnic-based LIS schools (i.e. Departments of Library and Information Science in Nigerian polytechnics) operate a uniform curriculum approved by the regulatory

agency of polytechnics and allied technical institutions, i.e. the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). Meanwhile, there are so many areas and courses that need to be re-examined in the curriculum of both National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes. There are so many courses that were unnecessarily split into two or more. Such courses should be merged, and thereby create room for integration of other contemporary courses that are required in the digital era cum knowledge economy. Thus, curriculum review is inevitable at the National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels.

Take for instance, at the National Diploma (ND) level, the recent curriculum used was published by the NBTE in 2002. In that curriculum, there is no basis for History of Libraries I & II, Types of Libraries I & II, and Reference Sources I & II. These courses should not have I & II components, but rather should be compressed as one respectively. In addition, Cataloguing I & II, and Classification I & II should also follow suit, since there are additional Cataloguing and Classification I & II, with each having four (4) credit units load.

At the Higher National Diploma (HND) level, the curriculum currently used was published in 1990 by the NBTE. There is no need for Collection Development I & II, since the students offered such a course at their ND level before HND admission. Current Awareness Services I & II are unnecessary, but should be compressed as one and renamed Readers' or Users' Services in Libraries. Research Methods I & II

may be spared since the latter emphasized more on statistical applications, but Project I is not necessary and should be expunged. Splitting the various types of libraries as separate courses should be looked into. Academic Libraries and Special Libraries/Information Centres should be combined, whereas National Libraries and Public Libraries/Information Centres should come together as a course, in line with LIS draft curriculum for universities (Okojie, 2014a). Sadly, the most unfortunate aspect is that the NBTE curriculum presently used for HND LIS programme in Nigerian polytechnics was published in 1990. This is 2017, meaning that 27 years old curriculum is still actively used in Nigeria. This is not only unfair, but also totally unacceptable in 21st century education and training, and could have been responsible for curriculum enrichment programme of new library and information schools in Nigerian polytechnics (Ugwuogu & Igwe, 2015).

The merging of the aforementioned courses will create avenue for the integration of courses involving emerging trends in line with the demands of the present era for result-oriented information services. Some of these courses are information literacy, knowledge management, infopreneurship, e-publishing, information products and services, public relations and marketing, advocacy and lobbying, web design and development, e-content development and management, database management, new media and communication, online information services, information ethics, trends in

scholarly communication, among others.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to state that the polytechnic-based library/information schools should not be left out in the trend towards nomenclature change. National Diploma in Library and Information Science (LIS) may remain as it is or better changed to National Diploma in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM); but at the Higher National Diploma level, there is need for specializations such as: HND – Information Resources Management, HND – Knowledge Management, HND – Records and Information Management, and HND – Publishing and Multimedia Technology. These specializations are in line with the calls for training LIS practitioners in various areas for the 21st century job market (Simisaye, 2014). Other allied areas of LIS such as business information management and agricultural information management should be properly accommodated in the various specializations. For health information management, it is already a separate programme with ND and HND levels run by the colleges/schools of health technology which are also under the supervision of NBTE. Thus, LIS as a multidisciplinary field will therefore succeed in giving room for options, depending on the interests of the students. There will be compulsory courses for all the specializations; however, these various options will definitely make the study of LIS in the polytechnic sector not only attractive to students, but also fulfilling for challenging career and entrepreneurial opportunities in the future.

University-based LIS Schools: Although the National Universities Commission (NUC) produces benchmark minimum academic standards (BMAS) for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities, however, universities still have their right to develop their academic brief cum curriculum, but in line with the BMAS. The latest draft BMAS for LIS was released in 2014, but the number of university-based library/information schools that have reviewed their curriculum in line with it is not yet known. Despite the integration of many education courses in it, the aspect of BMAS content that is worth commending states that LIS could be domiciled in its own faculty or related one, and interested library/information schools to award BLS, BLIS, B.Sc. (LIS/RM), B.A. (LIS), B.Tech. (Library and Information Science/Technology), or BSc. Library and Information Management, as their degree nomenclature, depending on their choice (Okojie, 2014a). In addition, we are yet to see the report or outcome of the library school curriculum review and development of benchmark summit organized by Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) in 2015 at Lokoja, Kogi State.

Meanwhile, there are existing, and also emerging information-based fields that are fast influencing LIS and its information services delivery philosophy. It is now a fact that for LIS to remain relevant in the present society, it cannot do without information and communication technologies (ICTs), or else the nature of neglect that will be associated with the profession in its education, training and services will be unprecedented.

ICT is even a discipline studied independently in universities, in addition to computer science, not only in Nigeria, but also in other countries across the universe. Therefore, integration of ICT in LIS education should not just be theoretically-based, but should be accompanied with aggressive hands-on training and instructions for acquisition of practical skills in computing, programming, web design, content development and database management.

Furthermore, recently, the National Universities Commission (NUC) developed a new course tagged 'BSc. Information Science and Media Studies' (Okojie, 2014b). A thorough assessment of the curriculum and course contents shows that the emphasis is on combination of information management and multimedia technologies. Definitely, graduates of such a programme will have the capacity to perform the work of BLIS holders as it pertain to principles and practices of information management in the areas of acquisition, processing, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources in all types of libraries as well as information and documentation centres of corporate establishments and government agencies. Presently, the Pan Atlantic University, Lagos; the American University of Nigeria, Yola; and the University of Ilorin (as Department of Information and Communication Science) are offering the programme. Gradually, other universities will start running the programme. Can we say the new programme is a threat/challenge to university-based LIS education or what? It may or may not; depending on the extent of what

leadership of the Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) will do to save the profession. Rebranding and repackaging of LIS in areas of nomenclature, curriculum, programmes, as well as education and training pattern, are inevitable, not only for sustainability of LIS schools, but also to play active roles in the achievement of the SDGs.

The afore-stated issues reinforce the fact that for universities that intend to start library/information school, they should consider contemporary nomenclature in tandem with the knowledge economy, and their curriculum should reflect same, thereby training innovative and entrepreneurial information practitioners and knowledge management experts for all sectors of the knowledge economy. Thus, the calls for nomenclature change of library/information schools (DLIS) in Nigeria to Department of Information and Knowledge Management (DIKM), in line with global best practices, interdisciplinary research and emerging opportunities still remain a necessity (Mutula, 2013; Uzuegbu, Igwe & Nnadozie, 2015; Nnadozie, Igwe & Nwosu, 2017), and as such, should be given consideration, vigorously pursued and actualized.

Strengthening MLIS Programme in Nigerian Universities

The possible rebranding of LIS nomenclature to Information and Knowledge Management (IKM), as it was done in developed knowledge economies, will not affect the usual Master of Library and Information

Science/Studies (MLS/MLIS) programme of Nigerian universities. The fact is that MLIS, having professional and academic components, remains the main qualification required of a professional librarian, and will still be run in our LIS schools. However, with the trends in information services delivery, university-based LIS schools should work towards ensuring that henceforth their MLIS graduates must be able to acquire hands-on and practical ICT skills in areas of programming, web design, content development and management, library management system, database management, digital preservation, development of institutional repositories, and social media application and use for library services.

In addition, the poor level of information literacy competence among different classes of individuals in the society such as students and graduates (Ukachi, 2015; Onuoha & Molokwu, 2016; Jinadu & Kiran, 2016), and even practicing librarians (Ojedokun, 2014; Baro & Eze, 2015; Anyaoku, Ezeani & Osuigwe, 2015) demands that information literacy and strategies of its functional delivery should be aggressively taught in MLIS programme, as well. This is because MLIS graduates will end up as information literacy educators and instructors in their various institutions and establishments.

Case for Master of Knowledge Management Programme in Universities

For university-based library/ information schools that are running undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in LIS and its allied areas, there is need to develop a professional master degree programme in knowledge management (Master of Knowledge Management). Although there are other related professional master degree programmes like Master of Information Management run by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Bayero University, Kano, as well as Master of Health Information Management and Master of Media Resources Management run by the University of Ibadan; the Master of Knowledge Management (MKM) programme will be a paradigm shift in response to the knowledge economy. MKM will capture both explicit and tacit knowledge, but with more emphasis on the latter, and will be geared towards projecting, via education and training, the strategic role of knowledge in businesses, organizations and establishments in the knowledge economy.

The MKM programme should be tailored in a way that reflects management of tacit knowledge and innovations for the purpose of enhancing business decision making and organizational competitiveness (Centre for Applied Knowledge and Innovation Management, 2017). Such MKM programme should be patterned in a way that signifies a departure from traditional library operations and services (librarianship) based on explicit knowledge, to a contemporary business dimension that focuses on tacit knowledge management, which cuts across knowledge discovery, capturing, organization, sharing, and utilization for productivity and competitive advantage in diverse establishments. In addition, the programme structure and mode of delivery should project LIS as a multidisciplinary field that has

strategic contributions to the success of businesses, enterprises, organizations and corporations, mostly through the implementation of knowledge management programmes, which contributes significantly to organizational sustainability and competitive advantage.

The Master of Knowledge Management (MKM) programme should be like after-sought MBA (Master of Business Administration) programme that is offered by individuals from diverse academic backgrounds; but the focus will be on the strategic role of knowledge in all affairs and engagements of man. Thus, from areas of agriculture, health, business, engineering, social and humanitarian issues, science and technology, among others, individuals/practitioners in these fields need to understand the place of knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, in their operations and services, and therefore implement knowledge management programmes using experts like holders of MKM degrees.

The admission into the programme should be open to graduates of all disciplines, considering that knowledge management is implemented in all sectors of the economy, be it business, agriculture, health, education, engineering, construction, oil and gas, science and technology, among others. The content of the Master of Knowledge Management (MKM) should cover the following courses:

- Foundations of Knowledge Management
- Sociology of Knowledge and the Knowledge Economy
- Principles of Knowledge Management
- Research Methods and Statistics for Knowledge Management
- Knowledge Creation, Discovery and Acquisition
- Knowledge Sharing and Communication
- Knowledge Management Theories, Models and Frameworks
- Entrepreneurship and Knowledge Management
- Competitive Intelligence
- Scholarly Communication
- Technologies for Knowledge Management
- Managing Innovations, Research and Development
- Learning Organisations and Competitive Advantage
- Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Management
- Management of Indigenous Knowledge
- Knowledge Management Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The combination of the afore-outlined courses for MKM will result in training KM practitioners that will be responsible for various existing and emerging opportunities in different sectors of the economy.

Presently, there are series of existing and emerging career opportunities in the area of knowledge management in Nigeria, Africa and across the universe, of which a strategically planned and implemented MKM programme by university-based library/information schools will address. A google search on these career opportunities will convince many, in addition to the requirements. Such positions include knowledge manager, communication and

knowledge management expert, strategic information and knowledge management director, knowledge manager, learning and communication advocate, senior manager for knowledge management, knowledge manager and communication officer, organizational learning and knowledge management advisor, knowledge management coordinator, director of knowledge management, senior associate for knowledge management, monitoring, evaluation knowledge management officer, among others. Thus, a master degree programme in knowledge management that will address this gap is required in our knowledge economy, and LIS educators should drive it in their universities.

Supporting Infrastructure and Human Resources in LIS Schools

Infrastructure and human resources are fundamental in education and training; and are part of the contending issues affecting LIS in Nigeria. The study involving twenty (20) university-based LIS schools in Nigeria by Issa, Idowu, Harande and Igwe (2016) reveals that training library without relevant and diverse materials, information resource centre, ICT laboratory with functional systems and Internet connectivity are major resources lacking, serving as challenges in the LIS schools; and they operate with human resources that are of 'top-light and bottom-heavy pattern', and over 50% of the professorial staff cadre roaming as associate, visiting, and adjunct; as well as inadequate ICT professionals and technicians in the studied LIS schools. These issues need to be addressed.

Unfortunately, many LIS graduates (both BLIS and HND holders) are not securing job opportunities, and at the same time cannot actually create viable entrepreneurial opportunities. One of the major factors responsible for this is lack of skills, especially poor ICT skills, lack of web design skills, absence of content development skills, poor communication skills, and inadequate entrepreneurial competences. Presently, online information products and services, as well as digital marketing of products and services, are driving the universe. That is, the design, packaging, repackaging and marketing of information products and services via the Internet, is an area that LIS graduates can key in, and earn their living; but they do not have the requisite skills, due to poor infrastructure and inadequate human resources to drive the process.

LIS schools in Nigeria should have functional ICT laboratory in this digital era, with the services of ICT experts as technologists. Support of successful ex-students, philanthropists, politicians, and even departmental ICT levy should be explored. Furthermore, there should be deliberate engagement of ICT technologists in our LIS schools as technologists, so as to drive hands-on practice, and practical training of students in ICT-related areas and applications. In addition, NALISE should collaborate with members of Information Technology Section of NLA, possibly as adjunct lecturers/instructors, that are close to their institutions for training students in practical ICT applications for library and information services.

Conclusion

As it stands presently, LIS educators and the general LIS family in Nigeria should work collectively towards the sustainability of the profession,

making its significance and importance felt by all and sundry in the society. The unresolved contending issues raised and the emerging trends identified and suggested in this article are for the purpose of sustaining our LIS schools and librarianship profession on one hand, as well as to contribute significantly for the actualization of the SDGs in Nigeria. Nomenclature, curriculum, course contents, infrastructure and human resources are contending issues that need to be holistically addressed in both university-based and polytechnic-based LIS schools in Nigeria.

The leadership of NALISE should write to the NBTE and collaborate with the regulatory body for urgent review of the LIS curriculum for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in Nigerian polytechnics. Finally, as the Federal Government is planning the establishment of ICT University of Nigeria, with six study centres across the six geo-political zones of the country, LIS should be prepared to be among the programmes that would be run in that special university. This is because LIS is an information profession, and really needs to be seen as one in line with the demands of the digital era.

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