CHALLENGES OF INNOVATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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PAPER PRESENTED AT THE 29th ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CURRICULUM ORGANIZATION OF NIGERIA (CON) HELD AT NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NERDC), ABUJA, 21ST-24th SEPTEMBER, 2016.

Abstract

The paper focuses on the challenges of innovation in library and information science education curriculum in Nigeria: implication for national development. The field of library and information science (LIS) has also been predominated by advances in ICT which has brought about changes in library and information science education. Changes is now occurring in the areas of education and training, information seeking behaviour of users as well as in the areas of service delivery. This paper therefore explores areas ICT can be applied in LIS education, examined library and information science education, the concept of innovation and curriculum, innovation in library and information science education, the implication of library and information science education for national development. The challenges and recommendations in LIS education were also discussed.

Introduction

Library and information science education in Nigeria has come a long way. Since the first library school in 1960 at the university College Ibadan, several changes have been witnessed in the society at large and in the library profession in particular (Igwe, 2005). It is inarguable that developments in our society technological or otherwise have brought significant changes to library and information science (LIS) education all over the world. Among all the changes 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 personnel in the field, but also meet challenges the ever changing information society brings (Chu, 2006).

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 survival of library and information science education in Nigeria depends largely on the quality of faculty and students processing and transmission (Edegbo, 2011). According to Edegbo (2011) librarianship today has arrived at the information age where the role of information is increasingly emphasized as an economic resource, a marketable commodity and as a social wealth.

Library and 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. For many library and information science schools as

enumerated by Nwalo (2000) this doubting task requires the acquisitions of new resources, expertise and careful planning.

The education and training of LIS professionals has to be such that it empowers them to unleash their potential as they endeavour to offer relevant and efficient services within the current levels of technological sophistication (Minishi-Majanja, 2003). Curry, (2002) observes that library and information science (LIS) education have witness not only this increasing globalization of higher education but also that of the LIS' work place including the consequent extension of competition beyond traditional, institutional, national and regional boundaries. The author further states that environment has made it important for LIS education and training to strive to improve their quality of programmes. On the one hand to be able to participate in educational networks and develop innovative strategies in planning and administration of LIS education while on the other hand, to produce graduate where work place spans the whole world.

The Concept of Innovation and Curriculum

According to Izuagba (2011), innovation simply means the use of new ideas, methods or inventions and to create something new, which has long time positive to impact on education at all levels. Innovation can also be conceived as new ways of doing things in relation to methods, contents and techniques. Kanno (1997) sees innovation as a deliberately desired plan, change which is intended to yield better result. Innovation focuses on the creative selection, organization and utilization of human and material resources in new and unique ways, which will result in the attainment of a higher level of achievement for the defined goals and objectives (Mkpa and Izuagba, 2009). Innovation by implication centres on human and material resources and that they are purposeful and goal oriented.

Various definitions of curriculum have been provided by scholars and writers. According to Ocholla (2000) a curriculum is a fundamental part of any education or training programmes which gives information on content, purpose, method of a programme or course of study. Edegbo (2011) states that a curriculum is a complex term that has no agreed upon definition. Some educators defined it as comprising all planned experiences that are results of what teachers do. Others expand the definition to include all the experiences that a learner has at school, whether or not planned, to reach the institution's broad goals and objectives. Such experiences may consist of a pattern of courses, guidance, specific instruction, physical activities, and opportunities for experiences, testing and evaluation. Curriculum should be reasonable, complete, have goals and objectives, reflect planning, relate to instruction and learning theories, consider the learner, have criteria for evaluation, be capable of being evaluated, and reflect a sound educational philosophy. Curriculum is more than just a programme of studies or a set of sequence of courses to be followed by the students.

Ross (2000) states that a school's curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organizational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its students. It includes not only the formal programme of lessons, but also the informal programme. Teaching and learning styles strongly influence the curriculum and in practice they cannot be separated from the curriculum. The foregoing definitions clearly points to the fact that a curriculum is a series of learning experiences as well as an instrument that is use in training prospective students in a school, so as to impart in them the skills relevant to their chosen professions.

Innovation in Library and Information Science (LIS) Education

With the advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the nature of information and information environment is changing dramatically. It is without doubt that information is considered as the bedrock of societal development particularly in this 21st century. The increase need for information, as well as the changing situation in the LIS field has therefore necessitated that LIS Schools worldwide should devise new approaches in order to be responsive to the changing needs and demands. Thus, there is the need for new skills and training for LIS practitioners which is expected to be reflected in the curriculum of LIS schools in order to accommodate the changes. LIS curriculum is the mirror to all LIS programmes offered in an institution; as such it is expected to be dynamic. Rehman (2003) notes that Library and Information studies (LIS) has undergone major changes during the last couple of decades whereby changes in the names of schools, degree titles, and program offerings have become a common trend. In a similar situation, Beheshti (1999) reports that in the past decade, more than 50% of LIS programs in the United States and Canada have completely revised their curricula.

According to Kavulya (2007), recent trends in ICT have witnessed developments in internet and multimedia technology which is the key to the vastly increasing speed and quantity of information transfer across the global networks. This led to proliferation of electronic resources such as e-journals, e-databases, e-archives and digital libraries. The adoption of a wide range of ICTs calls for training that enables graduates to develop information systems which will help people to meet their information needs efficiently.

The contemporary information arena in which ICTs serves as a driving force has meant that the LIS field has to take advantage of the emerging technologies i.e. the Internet, Intranet and other new technologies for training of future information professionals to assume their expected roles. Minishi-Majanja (2003) notes that the rapid development of ICTs, has meant that LIS curriculum and structures have to be reorganized, infusing greater ICT knowledge and skills into courses and providing more hands-on practice. Lim (1999) opines that the emergence of the concept of the virtual library provides the opportunity for library schools to restructure their curricula and to make them more relevant to the needs of the profession in the 21st century. In other words the curriculum should be built around the virtual library model. Thus, it is now a common practice to find LIS Schools struggling to infuse ICT related courses in their curriculum which is expected to give them new lease of life in the training of their students in the 21st century.

Due to developments in ICTs, information professionals whose fundamental mission is to collect, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information have faced new challenges, because of the change in the nature of information. Consequently, the¡ need additional skills to be able to fulfill their mission (Megnigbeto, 2007). Malekabadizadeh, Shokraneh and Hosseini (2009), observe that the essential role of librarians and information scientists in providing access to information for development means that LIS departments must provide dynamic educational system which necessitates basic changes in the curriculum. In addition, the curricula should include skills related to designing, consulting, and improving information systems. Mohammed (2008) concludes that due to the need for new competencies expected in the information /digital age, LIS schools

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should continually review their curriculum to fit the contemporary age expectations.

The Implication of Library and Information Science Education for National Development

Regardless of the notable negative impact of underfunding of educational institutions in Nigeria, the library remains the "core' and' most vital equipment of; any recognized educational institution. This is because, as a resource, it occupies a central and primary place serving the functions of teaching, learning and research in the creation of new knowledge, promotion of current information in professional practice and transmission of posterity of the learning; and culture of the present and past age, (Lawal, 2004). In this 21st century, information has receive a widespread acceptance, as the essential feature of production, consumption and' exchange. The world has entered era where the source of .wealth and power is increasingly from information and human mental creativity as compared with physical resources. Thus global economy has become not only knowledge intensive but also transactional and extremely competitive (Opeke; 2004).

Because of the central place of information in national developments exemplified by the topmost economies of the world, Nigeria needs to mainstream libraries and information in her development project.

This necessitates that information be perceived, portrayed and utilized as a requirement for the peoples; survival and be used to harness their sentiments, energies and talents, for appropriate development actions. In this regard, librarians in academic libraries and other libraries for that matter must be the major, actors in providing, designing, coordinating, maintaining and steering the course of the information powered development. Such information must be accurate, timely, relevant, complete and concise. Furthermore, in this 21st century which is the age of the internet; information and Communication Technology (ICT) will be

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employed at its highest level to harness the necessary information globally for accelerated national development.

Challenges

Some of the Challenges of LIS Education Programmes are as follows:

1. Inability of the Nigeria to quickly implement modern change in curriculum. Curriculum of LIS profession has been constantly changing, incorporating the study of ICT, but this has not been fully implemented in LIS curriculum, thus, hampering training and skill development.

2. Nigeria factor (corruption): poor management; through non-implementation of the approved fund, and /or diversion of funds to private pocket affects smooth operation and development of the profession.

3. Lack of sponsorship for (re)training; workshop, conferences, or seminars, injected myopic exposure to new innovation, and in professional training of the librarian's.

4. Inability to introduce core computer system operation and management to library schools has made an adverse effect to efficiency in information management, which directly leads to production of half-baked graduate in LIS schools.

5. Poor innovation in professionalism of librarianship hindered growth and development of the school.

Recommendations

Based on the problems identified, this paper resolved to sort the following solutions to ameliorate them.

1. Nigeria LIS schools will be repositioned to adapt to Constance change in technology, innovations in curriculum of study in other to stay connected to the shall be a roadmap current trend.

2. There is need for regular and continuous review of the curriculum so as to sustain developmental plan, which should be succinctly followed and ignite to place Nigerian LIS schools into comity of performing departments across the globe.

3. Core computer system and management need to be introduced to LIS schools and professionally handled to transmit a worthwhile knowledge to students and trainee.

4. Adequate measure to checkmate corruption, and ensure standardization and quality, should be introduced. This will aid to eradicate waste and enthrone sanity in financial and policy management.

5. Library schools should plan ahead of time and develop education programmes that quickly respond to market needs, fill the skill gaps and prepare manpower for easy transition to the electronic information handling.

Conclusion

This paper justifies why ICT is necessary in LIS education curriculum. LIS is vital for national development. The emerging electronic information scenario, perceiving the need for new possibilities of desired skills and competencies in the ensuring years, library schools in Nigeria should collaborate to identify new ways competencies can be imparted to students in LIS with the objectives of giving learners a better deal in life and offering the society and institutions effective knowledge managers. LIS education in Nigeria should build curricula and create infrastructures that not only match the dynamics of the knowledge society but also creates excellent job opportunities and better placements for their graduates. Discussion on LIS education is never ending, hence library schools in Nigeria should develop training techniques and programmes for librarians to thrive in today's changing world.

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