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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION AND WEALTH CREATION: A PARADIGM SHIFT

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Abstract

The paper canvasses the idea of a paradigm shift from Library and Information Science (LIS) graduates relying only on paid employment to education with requisite skills capable of producing graduates who will be job and wealth creators. The paper contends that in a knowledge economy, information is a critical resource that must be packaged into products and services which have functional utility value to organizations, individuals and government agencies. It shows that the current LIS curriculum is deficient in marketing strategies and entrepreneurial education orientation necessary for raising professionals who will establish and sustain profitable information product and services firms. There must be conscious effort at creating information needs in an economy through environmental scanning and generating innovative ways of meeting those needs. Consequently, it is recommended that LIS graduates be well equipped with the necessary academic training, skills, and mastery to package and repackage Information and data into consumable knowledge. Also good entrepreneurial skills and marketing strategies training should be integrated into the curriculum at all levels, and taught by seasoned academics who will inculcate into them the practical capability of same.

Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by a great influx of information. Thus we live in an information society, a knowledge driven economy and people constantly need information to run the varied sectors effectively. Obama (2005), says "we live in a 21st century knowledge economy". where increasing reliance on information creates an environment that is full of opportunities for information professionals who have skills to harness and be creators of wealth and job, in this era of unemployment in most parts of the world. However, library and information science programmes prepare students for performing traditional librarianship and archiving tasks, (Aharony, 2008). The increased importance of information in this age calls for an urgent review of the curriculum in our library schools with a view to expanding it and integrating courses that will equip LIS graduates with requisite skill for job and wealth creation rather than rely only on paid employment. Marketing strategies and entrepreneurial education will improve the image of library and information science and more importantly raise professionals who will establish and sustain profitable information products and services' firms. Aharony, (2008) identified that, LIS education and indeed the profession itself are facing new competition and must acquire new knowledge to cope with it successfully while Bates (1999), commenting on the present and future status of LIS education curriculum purported that;

Education for the information professions is revolutionary, not incremental and in order not to become marginalized, we must recognize that we are in the information business, not the library business. Therefore, we need to produce graduates with sophisticated management, policy and planning skills and the vision to translate core values to today's and tomorrow's information world. pp.1043

The avalanche of information in our societies is to meet the need of the time. In a knowledge economy, information is a very critical resource and must be packaged into products and services which have functional utility value to organizations, individuals and government agencies.

However, LIS graduates are not equipped for this task. Presently, library and information science education do not include courses that prepare individuals to be independent. The current LIS curriculum is deficient of marketing strategies and entrepreneurial skill, necessary for raising holistic professionals. Consequently, LIS graduates rely only on the scarce paid employment even in the face of a fast growing competition. Apparently, LIS training no longer automatically guarantees students the first pick of all employment opportunities in the field of information work. There must be conscious effort at creating information need in an economy through environmental scanning and generating innovative ways of meeting those needs. It is urgently needful therefore, for LIS graduates to be educated on how to identify potential tangible information products and services, package them properly and market same. Education for LIS should expand, beyond skills and technology, to include new cognitive, social and situational processes. Indeed only LIS education that translates to practical solution the myriads, of societal challenges on a commercial basis will provide opportunity for job and consequently wealth creation. The scope of the library profession has to increase beyond white collar job perspective to more productive career prospects. Library and information science schools which offer entrepreneurship skills and marketing strategies in addition to the traditional curricula will be more successful in meeting the existing market for information professionals and eradicate the problem of unemployment and underemployment that result in LIS graduates roaming the streets.

Specific Objectives of the Study

- i The paper will, among other things canvass the idea of a paradigm shift from LIS education prepare graduates for only paid employment to raising holistic professionals
- ii It will also examine library and information science education and wealth/ job creation.
- iii Finally, it will explore the role of information professionals in a knowledge economy and draw the attention of stake holders to same

Concept of Wealth Creation

In order to take a more critical look at the concept of wealth creation, it is pertinent to consider the term "Wealth". The concept of wealth varies from one society to another. Therefore the word wealth means different things to different people. For instance, the Webster Dictionary of English sees "wealth as natural resources of a country whether or not exploited;

the economic activity of a nation; anything which can be exchanged for money or barter”.

Heller (2003) defines wealth creation in terms of income generation or more broadly as the creation of assets, both in terms of physical and human capital. Chukwuwunonyelum (2008) in Dada (2005) states that wealth creation simply refers to economic growth and better standard of living of the individual, family, or state. He explained, using the Poverty Alleviation Relief Reduction Eradication and Wealth Creation (PARREW) model, that wealth creation refers to two concepts, the “coping strategies and empowerments”. But for the purpose of this paper, we shall only consider the empowerment concept. The empowerment concept according to him is a process and dynamic definition, which gives people power over the different social, economic, cultural and political forces which govern their lives. When people gain power and control over these factors, they achieve social and economic progress. The aim of empowerment is to create true wealth and involve the people in all aspects of governance. Any wealth creation initiative therefore must increase the productivity of the individual and family. It must boost the human capital elements such as knowledge, skills and health, which increase the total productivity of the individual and the human development index of the society.

LIS Education and Career Opportunities

Library and information science education is an academic programme that prepares professionals for a broad range of career opportunities. Apart from the traditional library duties, graduates are trained in modern information services. The traditional library duties include acquisition of library materials, organization and management of library resources. Thus restricting librarians to the library environment with job opportunities as academic, school, and special librarians depending on the special field of the parent institution where they work. However, modern librarianship and information science out spans the traditional library environment to institutional settings, and owning businesses and information centers. More so, career opportunities exist in the areas of information architecture, information brokerage, information consultancy, vendor of information resources, systems management, corporate librarianship or independent information professional, publishing, database development and administration and so on.

Information Architecture: This is the act of synthesizing already supplied information and then forwarding same in categories to their different users. For instance the information architect of a research institute would send some data collected and categorized to administration, central finance office and research laboratories et cetera.

Information Brokerage: This is supplying information to users for a fee. Businesses, individuals and commercial organizations have become conscious of information as a resource. Therefore, for faster response to their information needs, the services of information brokers are employed. They are often not within an organization, but operate on their own or work in groups or form a company where they specialize in different subject areas. According to Igbeka (2008), their job cannot be specifically defined since they perform different functions. Consequently, there is really no job description accrued to information brokerage. Information is such a nebulous commodity; those seeking it will have a wide variety of needs. It will therefore, not be possible for information brokers to do the same thing or perform same type of jobs. As a result, no two information brokers’ jobs are exactly alike (Rugge and Glossbrenner, 1997).

Systems Management: Systems Librarians develop, troubleshoot and maintain library system, including the catalogue. They are also in charge of managing the databases that Libraries license from third-party vendors.

Corporate Librarianship: This entails working mostly in corporations, information management consulting firms, private businesses, government agencies et cetera. Corporate librarians or Special librarians are information resource experts dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goals of their organizations. They do more than locating information. With new technologies they add value to information by evaluating, analyzing, organizing, packaging and presenting same in way that maximizes its usefulness (Igbeka 2008).

Publishing: It is the process of producing books, films, computer programs, records, newspaper, periodicals, discs, bulletins, magazines et cetera, for dissemination, reading, studying, searching and entertainment/relaxation. The Britannica Concise Encyclopedia (2003) defines Traditional publishing as the activity that involves selection, preparation and marketing of printed matter, and contemporary publishing as the production of materials in digital such as CD-ROM, as well as materials created or adapted for online, electronic distribution. While according to Okwilagwe (2001) publishing is the planning, selecting, cutting, designing, producing and marketing (promotion, sales and distribution) of printed materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and many others including electronic products.

The publisher assumes the responsibility for the issuance of a book to the public. He is different from a printer and the binder, who manufactures the books, and he is also different from the retail bookstore manager. The publisher contracts with the author if he is under copyright, for the right to issue the book, design the physical form of the book and promote its sales through the distribution of review copies, advertising, a sales force, announcements and other similar means. The publisher maintains the stock of copies and handles sales to wholesale and retail bookstore and on occasion by mail to individual purchases (Igbeka, 2008).

Information Consultancy: the information consultant, among other things can embark on establishing libraries for organizations, institutions and schools. It could be a traditional print library or an electronic library.

Information Products/Services and Wealth Creation

The term product refers to a tangible or physical product (for example, a car, toilet soap, CD-ROM containing information) as well as an intangible service (e.g. insurance, bank deposit schemes). However, from a marketing point of view, we need to see products from a different perspective. Kotler (1994) defines product as 'anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or a need.' Levitt (1991) notes, 'To a potential buyer, a product is a complex cluster of value satisfactions.... Customers attach value to a product in proportion to its perceived ability to help solve their problems or meet their needs.'

From a managerial point of view, a product consists of the following three components (Kotler, 1988):

- **Attributes that the Product or Service Contains**

These are basic characteristics of a product/service which include features, styling, quality

levels, brand name, packaging, size variants, etc. For information products, aspects like content, number of journals covered, extensiveness and exhaustiveness of information provided are examples of product attributes. For a 'lending service' offered by a library, the number of books that a client can borrow, the period for renewing the book, the penalty for exceeding the renewal date. et cetera, are the attributes of the service.

- **Benefits that the Product or Service Offers**

These are what consumers derive from the product. Each of the elements mentioned as a product attribute, by itself, does not have a meaning unless it either individually or collectively, offers some benefits to the customers. For example, in the context of an information product, say, a reference periodical, attributes such as the method or type of categories followed for indexing of the articles covered, number of journals scanned for the periodical, and nature of technology used—CD-ROM versus print versus on-line— together provide the benefit of easy and quick reference of the latest research in that particular field. Therefore, product attributes, though independent, are inter-woven with product benefits. Sometimes, very intangible features, like brand image, by themselves can provide benefits of prestige or exclusivity to consumers.

- **Marketing Support Services**

These include delivery, guarantees, after sales service, et cetera. In fact, no product is complete without support services, although its level may vary depending on the nature of the product/service. For example, a product like an automobile or a consumer durable will require a strong after sales service, whereas, a product like toilet soap does not require any after sales service. In the context of information products, for example supplying the full text of an article which is requested on the perusal of an index of articles (product) could be a major support service to the product.

In summary, product is an object of exchange for delivering value satisfaction to a customer by providing a bundle of benefits through physical and non-physical attributes and other marketing support elements. Although the term product is used to connote both a physical product (a CD-ROM based reference source) as well as services (lending service, photocopying service), there is the need to understand the difference between them to better appreciate, the method of planning products and services.

Products and Services Planning and Wealth Creation

According to Coshy (1999), planning is a veritable start off for sustaining any business endeavor therefore, there is the need to plan information products and services. Also, changes in customer requirements, customer profile, competitive offerings and technology make it unavoidable for us to plan our products and services in a systematic manner. The need for products and services planning is based on factors such as changes in customer needs, changes in customer profile, changes in competitors products and services, and changes in technology among others.

- **Changes in Customer Needs**

Customer needs and requirements can undergo changes over a period of time. Consider, for example, an information product which provides abstracts of research publications indexed according to specific sub-topics made available in print form. Over a period of time, the type of categories followed for indexing abstracts may become somewhat irrelevant due to the

nature of research work being carried in that particular field. Other critical considerations include: the number and type of journals used by the target customers for their purposes; the change in periodicity of the publication from say, a quarterly publication to a monthly publication and so on. In other words, changes in customer requirements may necessitate that appropriate changes be made in our offer to the customers.

- **Changes in Customer Profile**

Sometimes, due to various external factors like education levels, type of courses offered to the student community, and so on. The profile of customers who have been using our products and services may undergo a change. For example, due to a higher exposure to management education, interest in research publications is no more confined to the academic community. Many practicing managers take an active interest in keeping themselves abreast with the latest developments in the various fields of management. Therefore, if we have an information product primarily targeted at the academic community, and if there is a shift in the composition of our customer group towards practicing managers, then we need to verify and confirm as to what changes or modifications are needed in our product to suit the requirements of the new client group.

- **Changes in Competitors Products/Services**

Improved products and services offered by competitors can render our product less attractive to our client group.

- **Changes in Technology**

Technological changes can have a significant impact on the relevance of many existing information products. Due to a major explosion of electronic media, several traditional information products in non-electronic format have become outdated. For example, a publication which contains abstract of important articles, in a particular field, may be preferred more in electronic format than in print media, provided the user has access to read the same using computers. Again, such changes in technology need to be absorbed by our products through a proper planning system.

Consequently, there will be no limitation to an abundance of wealth creation from information products and services, because people will always need information for effective running of every sector and in every field. Ogunleye (2006), opines that we are in an information age wherein progress might only be a dream for those without the right information because, information is not just power, it is fashion, it is money and even a prerequisite for survival.

All that is required of information professionals is continuous self development in skills acquisition for high competencies and a world class performance in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Although, critics of information's emergence as a product of industry like Poster (1990), holds high the value of free access to information as a public good for society. He claimed that the merger of mass communication and the computer makes possible rapid, universal distribution of information and therefore, in principle extends the democratization of knowledge. However, Bellinger et al (2004) advocates the restriction of information to those who can foot the bill Martin, (2003) and Irving (1991) claims that knowledge was never free and that knowledge is a hard-earned value, while Davis and Botkin (1994), states that any business can provide information but those that can convert information to knowledge will

be most successful.

Development of Wealth creation Skills and LIS Education

Formal education remains focused on bookish and white collar job unless there is a transformation in the curricular of our tertiary institutions. Education that is not well rounded, holistic or all encompassing is a limitation on the development of any nation. Consequently, as theoretical principles and issues are being taught in the class room there should also be concerted efforts at practicing same. Thapisa (1999) posits that a perfect situation is that where there is a balance between theory and practice. According to Kankam (2009) educational institutions were established for provision of knowledge, skills including that for creating wealth/job and right attitudes to the youth for meaningful integration as individuals into the society thereby contributing to societal growth and advancement. It is no gain reiterating the menace of unemployment and unemployable persons in the world today especially Africa and particularly Nigeria. Kankam (2009) observes that education which is supposedly the key to development can lead to raising unemployable and unemployed youths if not well planned and executed.

It is a desirable situation for LIS education to integrate theories with practical training that empower graduates for wealth and job creation. A well rounded graduate from a well planned and executed curriculum will definitely have the capacity to practice as self employed, employer of persons or white collar job practitioner. If according to Skyrme (2011), more than 70 per cent of work is information or knowledge related in wealth creating industries then Library and information science graduate ought to be in the fore front of wealth creation. Since it is their responsibility more than any other body to put knowledge management into practice. Skyrme (2011) made particular mention of varied activities and persons required for Formation of knowledge teams whose services are need in firms and industries, including:

information managers/librarians, information technologist (those who really understand end-user computing, intranets and specialist knowledge tools, such as document management, mapping, cataloguing etc.), human resource specialists, line managers, intellectual property specialists and facilitators.

Majority of services on the list are LIS education oriented which shows that there is a lot for LIS graduates to do in this time and age for wealth/job creation. However, a solid bridge must be built to eliminate the gap between theory and practice. In essence LIS education must begin to conform the changing information environment. Raju (2004) opines that the core courses should continuously evolve, as the information environment to which LIS education and training programmes need to respond is also in a state of flux. Thus human resource capacities must be strengthened within LIS profession beginning from library schools. The LIS profession needs more professionals especially at graduate level who are trained and able to clearly articulate proposals, policy, good packaging/repackaging of information, data base development, publishing, consultancy and decision making, ready to discourse with policy echelons of power in government, institutions, and private sector.

Relevance of Marketing to Library and Information Science Education

In the early conceptualization of a library's and information centre's business, Ranganathan had the concept of customer orientation embedded into it.

He described a library as:

... public institution or establishment charged with the care of a collection of books, the duty of making them accessible to those who require the use of them and the task of converting every person in its neighborhood into a habitual library goer and reader of books.
(Kumar, 2007)

According to Kumar (2007), Ranganathan's concept of the Five Laws of Library Science had the marketing concept at their core. The five laws were:

- *First law:* 'Books are for use.' (Maximize the use of books.)
- *Second law:* 'Every reader his book.' (Reader is the prime factor and his/her need must be satisfied.)
- *Third law:* 'Every book its reader.' (Find a reader for every book.)
- *Fourth law:* 'Save the time of the reader.' (Organize information in such a way that the reader finds the wanted information promptly.)
- *Fifth law:* 'A library is a growing organism.' (Emphasis is on comprehensive and evolutionary growth.)

A focus on customer needs (second law) and wants through saving of time (fourth law) is clearly emphasized in these laws, as far back as 1931. Also, the third law relates to finding a reader, probably implying that the library should reach out to the customers. A closer examination indicates that modifications are needed in the interpretation of the laws. Firstly the definition of a customer, only as a reader, needs to be widened to include the purpose of reading and ways of using the information. Secondly, in today's context the process of use of information (like use of computers/information technology (IT) to process the information obtained from the library/information centre) may give rise to totally new needs and wants (like getting information through e-mail which can be used directly on the personal computer (PC). Thirdly, given the usefulness of information in one library/centre to customers in different and far off locations, reaching out to customers is becoming far more important. Thus, though customer focus has long been advocated in the library profession, it may be refined to suit the current context of the market (Rao, 1999).

Entrepreneurship and Library and Information Science Education

According to Egboh (2009), entrepreneurship is a process of creating values by putting together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity. It is the ability to create wealth by bringing together resources in new ways to start a venture that benefits the customer and rewards its founder for their innovation. The willingness and ability of individual or group of individuals to seek out opportunities is the first step toward entrepreneurship. It involves perception and identification of opportunities and a creative response to the opportunities. Thus an entrepreneur is one who always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity (Egboh, 2009).

Library and Information science education is one volatile field where numerous exploitable entrepreneurial opportunities exist especially with the emergence of ICT and the

knowledge economy and society in which we now live. Ogunleye (2008), affirms that the so called information economy is more about utilizing information products and services to improve wealth creation by enhancing the competitiveness of business. He emphasized that the economy is based ultimately on the importance of information as a commercial tool and that for any entrepreneur to stay above his/her competitors, there will always be a dependence on information. Supporting this view, Igbeka, (2008) said that in this "Information age" the new information seeker is pre-occupied with too many projects and wants information as fast as possible, and in most cases in multimedia packages that are easily accessible and possibly, electronically and does not have the patience to spend long hours in the Library/ internet searching.

Roa (1999) opines that countries are clamoring for immediate fulfillment of ever-rising social and economic expectations, and are therefore asking for what information can do for the overall national development. He continued by saying that developing countries are no longer interested in information for the sake of information, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, or education for the sake of education rather, the new thought wave is that information is power only if you use it, not if you store it. He further stressed that as a consequence of the radical changes in the last decade – information revolution, globalization, marketization, privatization, and using information for development – the clientele interested in information services and products has been on the increase, and that before now, librarians and information managers have catered for the limited clientele of the school, college, university, research organization, government department, or public organization that has sponsored them. He concluded by asserting that increasingly, clients outside these limited groups are equally interested in information, for instance, practitioners of any profession and planners at national and organizational levels.

The onus therefore lies on information professionals to identify specific needs of the varied "clients" and package information for them in a useable format for a fee. However, with a requisite entrepreneurial inclusion in the LIS curriculum and sound training graduates will be able to maximize every opportunity that exists at their finger tips. Training in entrepreneurial skills is crucial to the development of the personality traits that are necessary for independent information professionalism.

Rugge and Glossbrenner (1997) pointed out that confidence, perseverance, adaptability, curiosity, pride in a job well done and ability to discover what the client really needs and wants are all valuable personality traits in information professionals while Kassel (2001) in her frequently asked questions on information brokering, listed six traits necessary for information brokering. They include:

- The ability to define and implement goals;
- An inclination to take calculated risks;
- An outgoing personality;
- Openness to change;
- Creativity and innovativeness in developing business ideas;
- The four Ds-Determination, Discipline, Dedication and Drive.

Conclusion

A comprehensive library and information science education is the best thing that can happen in this "Information Age". Library and Information Science graduates can be successful wealth creators, self-employed and employers of labor. All that is required of them is to have

adequate skills and knowledge of the concept, principles, theories and application in their field. As a result of the increasing competitiveness of business enterprises, it is inevitable for LIS professionals to be fully aware of the relationship between technical and economic factors in the profitability of a business. The interactions of technical, market, cost and other entrepreneurial variables affect the viability of investment and survival of any business. If information products and services' businesses/ organizations are to make profit in their operations, the revenue/income from the sales of products and services must exceed the cost of production. Therefore, understanding the sources and costs of funds, methods of estimating total capital requirements, operating costs etc are very pertinent for them to manage businesses, firms, or organizations that will survive and grow to maturity.

Recommendations

Consequently, it is recommended that LIS graduates be well equipped with the necessary academic training, skills, and mastery to package and repackage Information and data into consumable knowledge. Also good entrepreneurial skills and marketing strategies training should be integrated into the curriculum at all levels, and taught by seasoned academics who will inculcate into them the practical capability of same. It is hoped that if this is achieved, a new and dynamic breed of Library and Information professionals will emerge from our Library school to affect our society and nation in a way that poverty, underemployment and unemployment, in the field of library and Information Science will become history.

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