Article

ICT AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOR LIBRARIES: ITS RELEVANCE IN FOSTERING INTEREST AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIAN LIBRARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The traditional library science training has existed for decades in Nigeria. The students have come to us over the years, in the classrooms, across the library desks, etc. They are the real backbone and the real future of information profession. Now we have a new tool with which to help them, the ICT Library schools should realize that the technological preparedness depends on their students as future information managers and the crucial role they should play in preparing student for the information age. This paper discusses the problems created by lack of interest and consequent poor academic achievement in library science and strives to identify how ICT could be applied in rejuvenating and sustaining student interest in librarianship in this digital age.

1. Introduction

There are still so many unresolved issues in the education of librarians generally. One topic of current interest and concern is in the area of enkindling and sustaining the interest of undergraduates in library science. Teachers and administrators of librarianship observe with consternation the general lack of interest in library science among undergraduates. Specifically, Atinmo (2006) reports that Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) candidates who come to University of Ibadan take up library science courses after they have failed to get registered in other departments. Corroborating the view expressed by Atinmo, Obodoeze (2006) reports that students who seek admission to library science department of the Federal Polytechnic, Oko do so as their last resort. Data available at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko library school, indicate that out of the 150 candidates admitted into the department in 2003/2004 session, 88 of them defected to the then newly opened Department of Public Administration.

Library school students lack of interest in and aversion for certain librarianship courses were also reported by Nwalo (2000) when he observed that librarianship students in Nigeria generally dislike cataloguing and classification and would avoid it if they could. The phobia the librarianship students have for cataloguing and classification can only be compared with that which secondary school students in Nigeria have for mathematics, which incidentally is the bedrock of science and technology just as cataloguing and classification form the hub of librarianship. Nwalo's observation is just the tip of iceberg, because there is overwhelming evidence and testimonies by librarians and information scientists about poor academic achievement of students in library schools and departments across the country. Psychologists have the strong conviction that interest has been shown to relate to motivation, and it is known that these two constructs are correlates of achievement in university courses of which librarianship is one (Eze, 1990).

On the relevance of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in interest arousal and education of librarians in the information age, Nwalo's (2000) observation becomes even more relevant when he wrote that though funding is very essential in the success of a library's automation programme, lack of well-trained and motivated librarians can make nonsense of such a project, no matter the level of funding. Therefore, no matter the efficiency of the computer and related ICT, no matter the library automation programme, no meaningful progress can be made without appropriate staffing and staff education.

In the same vein, Oketunji (2002) takes a close look at the training of cataloguers and maintains that cataloguing departments have been facing enormous transition due to technological advances, changing administrative goals and shrinking budgets. The responsibilities of professional librarians have greatly expanded and now include scientific management, budgeting and planning. Many librarians feel unprepared for managerial responsibilities inspite of their graduate education. Educators and practitioners should examine the need for potential librarians and consider changing library school curricula in an effective and realistic manner to support this dynamic trend.

It is the considered view of Michael (1990) that library schools need to take the teaching of information science, computer literacy and other aspects of ICT more seriously.

Otherwise, graduates may not be very marketable and other professions will try to fill the gap thus created by producing non-grounded personnel. Hill (2000) in his article, "why are there so few of us," took a critical look at the reasons why so few people are applying for admissions and jobs in librarianship especially in cataloguing and technical services. The writer blames this situation on library schools, which convey the impression that librarianship, is neither worthy nor a reasonable path to pursue. For example, according to Hill (2002) courses in technical services now represent only a small portion of librarianship curricula and many library schools require students to take only an introductory course in bibliographic control.

2. Perceived Relationship between Interest and Academic Achievement

Librarianship students display lack of interest in library science. This, however, has not been extensively investigated and reported in library literature. Elsewhere, specifically in science, evidence available in literature shows that Nigerian students express great interest in science subjects. For instance, Anakebeh (1987) reported that since one science subject is compulsory for senior secondary students, 90% of them show inclination and choose biology as their only science subject. Aminu (1980) carried out a survey of students' interest level in integrated science and reported that 95% of the students have interest in studying the subject.

On the contrary, Okebukola and Jegede (1986) reported that science students do not consider lack of interest in science as a serious factor that contributes to their poor performance in science. In another survey conducted by Ukwungwu and Ugbaja (1990), students' high interest in integrated science was reported.

Interest and motivation are variables that have been shown to enhance academic performance in school subjects and university courses. For example, Okeke (1986) noted that a highly motivated student is likely to achieve more than a poorly motivated one student in subjects as the former would utilize every opportunity to learn the subject. However, achievement in library science remains generally poor. For example Tables I and II illustrate the success-failure rate in selected courses in the Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic, Oko.

Table I:
Success-failure Analaysis in Selected Courses at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko Library School, HND 1.

SESSION	COURSES	COURSE	SEMESTER CODES	NO OF STUDENTS	NOOF PASSES	%	NOOF FAILURES	%
2003/2004	Research Methods 1	LSC 313	1st	67	42	63	25	37
	Statistics 3 21	LSC	2nd	67	33	49	34	51
	Sc. & Tech information	LSC 325	2nd	67	36	54	31	41
	Advanced Cat& Class	LSC 322	2nd	67	41	61	26	39

Carry-over students are excluded

Table II:
Another set of students exposed to the same courses.

SESSION	COURSES	COURSE	SEMESTER CODES	NO OF STUDENTS	NOOF PASSES	%	NOOF FAILURES	%
2004/2005	Research Methods 1	LSC 313 321	1st	72	60	83	12	17
	Statistics	LSC	2nd	72	41	57	31	43
	Sc. & Tech	LSC 325	2nd	72	55	76	17	24
	Advanced Cat& Class	LSC 322	2nd	72	53	74	19	26

The foregoing trend appears consistent over the years, and is manifested in the final grades of each graduating set. Failure rate is still considered to be on the high side and lack of interest in the programmes may be one of the factors responsible for this costly syndrome.

It is very probable that students' innate interest in library science is being killed by the use of ineffective methods. In fact, in Okeke's (1986) considered opinion, teachers and lecturers should make courses more interesting and enjoyable by using their own "packs and tricks". "Packs and Tricks" here perhaps, refer to different innovative techniques in teaching, including the use of ICT which would appeal to the learners cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

It was Eshiet (1987) who re-emphasised the teachers' responsibility of enkindling and sustaining interest in their subjects areas. He wrote:

> *The major role in interest around,*
> *Development and sustenance should*

> *Be played by the teacher who is*
> *Expected to be knowledgeable, inventive*
> *And willing to give his time and*
> *Effort to the learners.*

Chidolue (1983) blamed lack of interest in courses on the presence of numerous irrelevant and abstract laws and principles to be memorized by students. While Chidolue's observation may be relevant in science, it does not apply to librarianship where there are fewer laws and principles to be memorized. However, Eshiet (1987) recommends the use of experiences which students have already acquired in life situation to catch and hold students interest in specific concepts. This applies to library science as well because the student's knowledge of application of Audiovisual (A.V.) and Information Technology (IT) materials may be tapped to its full advantage in teaching the use of ICT. On the problem of using ICT, in interest arousal, Michael (1990), writing under the caption, *Education and Training of Information Professionals in France,* rightly observed that most library schools are finding it difficult to change from the more traditional curriculum to one that may be radically different. They are also finding it particularly difficult to update their curricula because the teaching methods are very inflexible (textbook and lecture- based). The Nigerian situation may not be very different.

Oketunji (2002) takes a look at the structure of library science curricula and the mode of delivery and concludes that library schools generally speaking, are trying to adapt their courses to the needs of society but one still observes some dissatisfactions. He mentions specifically that many courses are based on too narrow a concept of what the information professional will be and will need as the library, schools keep to very traditional description of job content.

Writing on the education of librarians in an electronically-oriented society and sharing tne views expressed by Oketunji (2002), Okorafor and Iheaturu (2002) observed that the advances in information technology have certainly transformed many of the traditional library procedures, practices and functions and this transformation is positively impacting on the library profession and education of librarians. This is more so as the Nigerian educational system is yet to pas the blackboard/textbook stage of communication.

3. Role of ICT In Interest Arousal in Library Science

Although this issue has not been widely investigated and documented in the librarianship yet t copious references have already been made to ICT's role in fostering interest in the information profession generally. For instance, Jaafar (1998, 'iscussed Malaysian government plan to transform the country into a digital nation and howl libraries can play their strategic role in making ICT products and services easily accessible to the community. Educating the right calibre of staff and marketing ICT products and services are some of the strategies that libraries should consider in order to improve their services in the digital age.

In achieving the above aims, manpower development in terms of training, capacity building, retraining and skills upgrading becomes very fundamental. A society that consumes and generates the most knowledge and information is the strongest society. The information industry has grown dramatically in services, revenue, and coherence over the last decade. That is why appropriate personnel must be trained to face the challenges posed by reformatting processes as typified by the Digital, Paperless and Virtual libraries.; the use of electronic devices such as the CD-ROM, the use of other ICT infrastructure like the Internet, Intranet and Extranet services (Mohammed, 2000); the Fascimile machines, the Expanded Book, Optical Storage Mechanisms, DVDs (Digital Video Discs); HD-ROM (High Density Read-Only Memory); World Wide Web (WWW) etc.

In fact, the task that lies ahead for the new breed of librarians and information professionals is enormous. Therefore, in preparing staff for these challenges, library schools have a vital role to play in producing well-motivated personnel. Okorafor and Iheaturu (2002) suggested that the fulfillment of the above is bound to bring about some changes in the philosophy and methodology of teaching, learning and research in library science with a shift from teacher centred to student learning centred modes supported by availability of new technologies for delivery of support services such as the ICT infrastructure. In the circumstance, the use of the Internet will enable teachers, researchers and students alike to access databases, electronic journals, bibliographic references, factual and numerical data available from libraries and information centers of the world that are within the net.

It is a cardinal rule of pedagogy that the students' attention and interest should be stimulated and used productively. In trying to achieve the above from objective, firstly,

library schools will continue to solicit financial support from the government and public contributions. This will enable them procure the necessary ICT facilities. Secondly, library schools will be able to continually add new ICT products and services that will entice students to the department who would eventually perceive librarianship as a worthy career to pursue. Thirdly, by introducing ICT products and services in their teaching, library schools will create new images for themselves, as "informedia", "reformation for entertainment" and "education for entertainment" centers, hence creating learning environment that are enjoyable and entertaining for all the students (Jaafar, 1998).

4. Conclusion

It was Peter Drucker who once stated that "the purpose of a business is to create and keep its customers". As the world revolutionizes its system of information handling and communication the changes that have brought about the electronic age, the library schools must revolutionize its own methodology in producing the right calibre of practitioners for the libraries and information centers. Specifically, the library schools should wake-up to the challenges of our time by restructuring their curricula and modes of delivery in a way that will interest and motivate the students to face the challenges of the technological milieu. Aboyode (1983) has observed that library schools and departments that educate or train librarians who can only work in libraries are not relevant in this digital age, except where they are able to explore other opportunities outside the library. However, until these potentials of librarians are recognized and adequate instructional and research facilities provided, and other various constraints removed, graduates of our library schools and departments will continue to hang around the corridors of only those who hold library employment powers. It is, therefore, pertinent to reason that the potentials in education, the technological preparedness of librarians for employment for information work in electronic age cannot be fully realized unless library schools and departments are able to produce professionals who are competent and knowledgeable in information communications skills.

5. Recommendations

1. Better funding of our library schools by government andprivate organization is recommended. This will enable them cope with the dearth of trained staff in ICT related courses. With more funds available to the library schools, the onus now lies on them to integrate the traditional library and information systems,

methods and services with the emerging information communication technology (ICT), methods and services of the digital age, with a view to adequately and efficiently serve all strata of information seekers in Nigeria.

2. Library science is a highly skilled and technical subject area requiring the application of all available and necessary ICT. Based on this notion, it is recommended that library schools and departments in Nigeria should incorporate and utilize the ICT in their teaching programmes to enhance students' interest.

3. The multi-disciplinary nature of librarianship discipline and education for professionals for information job makes it imperative to create multiple opportunities for them. Library schools should take this situation into consideration and apply ICT in the production of subject librarians and non-subject ones. According to Taylor (1979), to educate librarians to think only in terms of a place called the library, as we currently know that institution is to do them disservice and probably condemn them to ineffectuality.

4. Library education in Nigeria, as we march into the information age, should be restructured for the realization of greater opportunities, as at present, there is a great level of inconsistency and contradiction in the programmes offered in our library schools and departments. The present structures of the curricula lack the basic skills with which the graduates of our library schools and departments can work effectively in non-conventiona1 library settings.

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