

## Entrepreneurial Skills for Employability, Job Creation and Productivity for Library and Information Technology Practitioners

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### Abstract

The present information epoch is characterized by global dwindling employment, ubiquitous economic recession and industrial crises amongst others. It is imperative for library and information technology practitioners to be adequately armed with entrepreneurial skills which could enhance their continuous productivity and employability in this information/knowledge driven society. Acquiring and utilizing entrepreneurial skills remains the *sine qua non* to joblessness and under-employment among library and information technology practitioners in an age characterized with stiff competition among alternative information service providers. An array of job opportunities (ranging from publishing, bookshop business, information brokerage etcetera) that are available for library and information technology practitioners who employ entrepreneurial skills are provided. Library and information technology practitioners who employ entrepreneurial skills and who at the same time are productive would be profitable to themselves and their respective organizations and remain continually employable.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial skills, Employability, Optimum job productivity, Library and information technology practitioners

### Introduction

In the present knowledge age characterized by an unprecedented change in the mode of creation, processing, distribution and delivery of information and knowledge, old manual tools have been forced to take backstage making previously favoured skills for employment and job creation otiose and no longer required. Knowledge workers are more than ever before challenged to play a very significant role in the knowledge management cycle of creation, processing, distribution, dissemination and use. The term, knowledge worker, describes someone who adds value by processing existing information to create new information that can be used to define and solve a problem. A knowledge worker is a problem solver, a person who uses intellect to convert his ideas into products, services and processes in order to earn a living or someone who uses knowledge and information to add to existing knowledge and information (Rowley, 2000). Librarians as core knowledge workers in a specific knowledge management role are faced with stiff challenges a result of the incursion of information technology into all known human endeavours. They need to transform from their traditional role as passive book minders to proactive content developers, selectors, processors and disseminators and adopt a new nomenclature of Library and information technology practitioners. The Library and information technology practitioner must be adequately armed with all necessary skills that could enhance their continuous employability and productivity in an information driven world. Library and information technology practitioners need skills that could engender self-reliance geared towards optimum productivity and continuous employability in an age where a multitude of highly qualified job seekers are chasing scarce jobs.

### Entrepreneurship Explained

The term 'Entrepreneurship' has been defined as the process of starting a business or other organizations (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia). Implied in this definition is that in starting a

business, the entrepreneur develops a business model, acquires the human and other required resources and is fully responsible for its success. This is the self-employment model in which the entrepreneur generates his/her own income directly from customers, clients or other organizations as opposed to being an employee or a business, organization or person. Such entrepreneurs either go solo, engage in part-time projects, build or establish large scale undertakings that create jobs.

But recently entrepreneurship has been extended from its puristic self-employment origins in business to intrapreneurship which means undertaking entrepreneurial activities within an existing firm or large organizations (Shane, 2000). In this case, the entrepreneur generates income directly from customers, clients and other organizations for the organization employing him/her. Stevenson and Jarillo (1990), supported this assertion by explaining that entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals, either on their own or inside organizations pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control reflecting the modern focus

More recently, the term has been further extended to include a specific mindset resulting in entrepreneurial initiatives in the form of social, political, information/knowledge and internet entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship involves creating charitable organizations which are designed to be self-supporting in addition to doing their good works (Dees, 1998). Political entrepreneurship refers to founding a new political project, group or political party by someone who is active in the fields of business or politics; seeking to gain profit through subsidies, protectionism, government contract, or other such favourable arrangements with government through political influence (rent seeking) by someone who is active in business; seeking to further one's own political career and popularity by pursuing the creation of policy that pleases the populace (Younkins, 2000).

Knowledge entrepreneurship or infopreneurship describes the ability to recognize or create an opportunity and take action aimed at realizing an innovative knowledge practice or product (Skrzeszewski, 2006). It is different from the traditional economic entrepreneurship which focuses on monetary profit rather than on opportunities to improve production (research) or personal transformation. Knowledge entrepreneurship is seen as the most suitable form of entrepreneurship for not-for-profit educators, researchers and educational institutions. Internet entrepreneurship means owning, founding or managing an internet based business enterprise and making money through risk or initiative (Livingstone, 2007).

### What is entrepreneur?

The term 'entrepreneur' originated from a 13<sup>th</sup> century French verb; 'entreprendre' meaning 'to do something' or 'to undertake' as obtained from *Concise Encyclopedia of Economics* by Russell S. Sobel. The loanword from French was coined by Jean-Baptiste Say. It was first defined by the Irish-French economist, Richard Cantillon in his *Essaisur la Nature de Commerce en General* (Essay on the Nature of Trade in General) as an individual who organizes or operates a business or businesses (Elrewer, 1999; Landstrom, 2007; Stevenson and Jarillo, 2007)). The word first appeared in the French lexicon with its entry in the French dictionary entitled *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce*, compiled by Jacques des Bruslons published in 1723 (Bhanudes, 2013). However, the word has since then been defined in a variety of ways by Jean-Baptiste Say (1803), Joseph Schumpeter (1834), David Mecllelland (1961), Peter Drucker (1964), Peter Kilby (1971), Howard Stevenson (1975), Albert Shapero (1975) and more recently Anyanwu, Amadi and Oparaku (2010), using the classical business framework. A social entrepreneur according to Dees (1998) adopts a mission to create and sustain social value by

drawing upon appropriate thinking in both the business and non-profit worlds and operate in a variety of organisations, large and small, new and old, religious and secular, non-profit, for profit and hybrid. A political entrepreneur, on the other hand, refers to a political player who seeks to gain certain political and social benefits for providing the common goods that can be shared by an organized general public. These common goods that the political entrepreneurs attempt to provide to the populace generally include foreign and domestic related public policy while the benefits they hope to gain involve voter support, public recognition and personal popularity (Younkins, 2000). A knowledge entrepreneur or infopreneur is someone who is skilled at creating and using intellectual assets for the development of new ventures or services that will lead to personal or community wealth creation or to improved and enhanced service (Skrzeszewski, 2006) An internet entrepreneur is a company founder, people brought into the company for their entrepreneurial skills, rather than because of their accounting or business skills (Livingstone, 2007).

Several researchers have justified the assertion that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in creating employment and wealth, enhancing productivity, strengthening managerial skill, encouraging self-reliance and national development. (Jones, Beynon and Packham, 2009; Anyanwu, Amadi and Oparaku, 2010 and Ismail. et. al. 2011, Eke, Igwesi and Orji, 2011, Nnadozie, Akanwa and Nnadozie, 2013). Fundamental to entrepreneurship is innovation which translates to a new method of production, new market or setting up of new organisation or the breaking up of new one. (Ejiogu and Nwajiuba, 2012). In other words, entrepreneurship is not just skill acquisition for acquisition sake, rather it is an acquisition of skills and ideas for the sake of creating employment for one's self and also for others (Anyanwu, Oduagwu, Ossai-onah and Amaechi, 2013).

Entrepreneurship is globally accepted to be critical to economic growth and development in an emerging economy such as Nigeria and it is a veritable tool in the improvement of the life and quality of citizens in any nation (Idogho and Ainabor, 2011). Entrepreneurship therefore is a crucial ingredient towards economic growth and job creation (Marshall and Samuel, 2006).

Entrepreneurial education is an integral part of general education aimed at preparing individuals for self employment, occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work (Ejiogu and Nwajiuba, 2012). Amoor (2008) opines that entrepreneurial education will provide the students with the opportunities to identify and develop a range of skills and attributes that will be of use to creating and shaping their future by experiencing both business and work environment. Entrepreneurial education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings (Ismail, Rak and Omar, 2011). In a survey carried out by Nnadozie, Akanwa and Nnadozie (2013) on the impact of entrepreneurial education on career aspirations, showed that majority of respondents 230 (80.7%) indicated that it makes the graduating students self-reliant and job creators closely followed by 221 (77.5%) who indicated that the courses on entrepreneurship lead to innovation. This could be responsible for the 203 respondents (71.2%) who reported that the entrepreneurial education has widened their employment options. A total of 91 respondents (60.0%) felt that entrepreneurial education showed them alternative careers to librarianship while 144 (50.5%) revealed that the programme broadened their knowledge base.

It is no news again that thousands of graduates are turned out on annual basis in Nigeria tertiary institutions alone to complicate the already precarious labour market. Researchers have affirmed that unemployment in Nigeria has reached frightening proportions (Oteh, 2009; Obisesan, 2010, Ehirheme and Ekpenyong, 2012; Ekere and Ekere, 2012). Acquiring and utilising entrepreneurial skills appropriately remains the sine qua non to joblessness and under

productivity among library and information science professionals. In an age of global economic recession, library and information science professionals must be creative, innovative and develop all forms of entrepreneurial skills that could make them not only to become self-employed but also employment creators therefore employers of labour rather than job seekers or hunters.

Rather than shadow-chasing or looking for inexistent job opportunities, library and information technology practitioners should be inward looking and avail themselves of different entrepreneurial skills geared towards their total economic emancipation. To stem the tide of youth restiveness in Nigeria which is an aftermath of unemployment, the federal and state governments have ordered the immediate intuition and practice of entrepreneurial education in all tertiary institutions in the country. Some state governments have gone ahead of the federal government to re-introduce and rejuvenate vocational and entrepreneurial education into their respective secondary school curricula as it used to be in the olden days.

The ultimate aim of the government is to groom a group of school leavers who would leave the secondary and tertiary institutions as: solution-providers and not problem-creators; as employers not job seekers; as producers not consumers; as inventors not vandals; as assets not liabilities; as developers not depletes; as visionaries not short-sighted to the socio-economic quagmire plaguing the country. Moreover, entrepreneurial education remains a potent tool that could be used to liberate Nigeria and other developing nations from the shackles of socio-economic neo-colonialism of white collar jobs. Library and information technology practitioners who could think fast would be innovative. They could easily generate new ideas on how to do things better in the library and information centres of the digital age. They could easily proffer solution to the existing problems in the present global information driven economy.

Such creative and innovative information professionals would in all probabilities be productive workers. High productivity would definitely engender continuous employability of library and information technology practitioners. In other words, library and information technology practitioners who are productive would enjoy intra-organisation employability (promotion) or inter-organisation employability (new job with enhanced job status). It is equally possible for such library and information technology practitioners to establish their own information firms and employ others to work in such organisations. If library and information technology practitioners would not be washed away in the surge and tsunami of ubiquitous unemployment that is the characteristic of the age, they must be armed with certain entrepreneurial skills.

### **Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Technology Curriculum**

The Department of Library and Information Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurship success in self-employment, intra-organizational employment in the areas of knowledge creation, acquisition, processing, distribution/dissemination and use by applying Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Our curriculum focuses on technical, entrepreneurial and management education. While the technical content of our curriculum focuses on modern technology in handling knowledge creation, acquisition, processing, storage, distribution, dissemination and use, the entrepreneurial content focuses on realization of opportunities for intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship, the management content focuses on the best way to organizing existing information/ knowledge institutions.

A highlight of skills provided in the curriculum of the Department for the entrepreneurial development of our students is given below. The list is not exhaustive.

### Technical Skills

- (i) Bibliographic skills: Library and information technology practitioner needs bibliographic skills like indexing, abstracting, cataloguing, classification, bibliography, biography and lexicography. It is envisaged that as the world transits from the paper age through the information age to knowledge age, all these bibliographic experts will be outsourced rather than employed on a salaried basis. Our course offerings in this particular area are: Collection Development, Organization of Knowledge, Information Repackaging, Cataloguing and Classification, Reference and Bibliography etc.
- (ii) Computing and Information Technology skills: In today's digital age, the library and information technology practitioner must acquire computing and information technology skills and be proficient in their use. Acquisition and proficiency in the use of computing and information technology skills are essential to being a successful practitioner. Such skills include systems analysis, system design, programming, database development, network analysis design and programming, web design, registration, hosting and management, etc. Our course offerings include: Introduction to Computer Science, Introduction to Programming, Object-oriented programming, Information Technology and Society, Information Technology and Libraries, Data Communication and Computer Networks, Analysis and Design of Library Information Systems, Database Design and Management, Software Engineering etc
- (iii) Information Management, Record Creation and Publishing Skills: The library and information technology practitioner should possess modern record creation and publishing skills. These skills include digital content creation, editing and mark-up, digital content printing, archiving and publishing. Our course offerings that support these skills include the following: Information Management, Information Sources and Communication Media, Publishing and Book Trade, Records Management, Electronic Publishing etc.
- (iv) Intrapreneurial Skills: Library and Information Technology practitioners need modern management techniques to enable them undertake innovation in the existing institutional libraries and record repositories. Courses offered in support of these skills include: Special Librarianship, Media Librarianship, Library Service to the Children, Academic Libraries, Public, National and School Libraries, Public Relations, Management of Change etc
- (v) Entrepreneurial Skills: Library and information technology practitioners need the following entrepreneurial skills to survive in enterprise creation and management. The skills are captured in the general entrepreneurship course offered by the Federal University of Technology Minna, called Entrepreneurship I and the Department of Library and Information Technology course called Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Technology. The skills are
  - (a) Risk taking: This is an important skill that an entrepreneur in library and information technology practitioner must develop. He/she must develop the ability of taking risk, managing risk and making profit at the end of the risk. Any entrepreneur who cannot take risk will find it difficult to succeed.
  - (b) Vision: Without vision the business is most likely to perish. The library and information technology practitioner would not be able to succeed if he/she does not have vision for the business. He must be business smart enough to see into the future, initiate ideas and be wise in decision making that would make him a super-star among other information providers.
  - (c) Learning: Learning is an important entrepreneurial skill that all Library and Information technology practitioners must adopt. Learning new skills in information and communication technology (ICT) in this information driven world is compulsory.

- Other new skills that are necessary should be made seamless as much as possible to daily routine. Learning is part of Life. Learning is growth. All information professionals should avail themselves of the learning potentials that are provided by ICT and other media of learning.
- (d) **Hard work:** Any library and information technology practitioner that desires success in his/her entrepreneurial venture must be hard working. No short-cut to success than hard work.
  - (e) **Currency and Information Smart:** Library and information technology practitioner that wants to break through in an entrepreneurial activity must be current with happenings in his business. He must be prudent and smart with information too.
  - (f) **Innovation and Creativity:** Innovative and creative minded library and information technology practitioner would generate new ideas, solve current problems in the information world and possibly create customer friendly information products.

### Factors that Accentuated Entrepreneurial Skills in Library and Information Technology Practice

The following are some of the factors that accentuated entrepreneurial skills in Library and Information practice:

- **Dwindling job opportunities:** Job vacancies are fading or nonexistent.
- **Budget cut and shrinking resources:** Cut-back in government budget for public utilities and infrastructure.
- **Encouragement by government:** Government encouraged small scale businesses.
- **Establishment of libraries and information centres.** Many new and existing organizations (public and private) are establishing library and information centres.
- **Value people place on information.** Many customers are willing to buy information products and use the services of information professionals at all cost.
- **Retrospective conversion.** Most manual operations in the library and information centres are undergoing retrospective conversion to digital formats.
- **Rapidly changing technological environment:** This environment that is changing rapidly has made information services and products to be on high demand than ever.
- **Rapid increase in available information:** information flows in different formats across the globe. This has put high demand on the work of information professionals.
- **ICT Potentials.** The unfolding scenarios of the information age and the potentials of Information Technology (IT) are producing ready entrepreneurial markets for many library and information science professionals.

### Employment Opportunities for Library and Information Technology Graduates

The vision the Department of Library and Information Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna is to produce graduates who can hold their own in the global information chain which entails information creation, production, distribution and dissemination. Our education programme has been tailored to achieve that vision. Consequently, there is room for the realistic hope that in the emerging information order in which our local society is transiting from the age-long manual, paper-based and information-poor environment and keying into the global information society which gets full benefits of information technology in all aspects of their lives at work, at home or at play, the graduates of Library and Information Technology are well prepared for salaried employment, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in the current and emerging library and information world. A highlight of employment opportunities for library and information technology graduates is given below. This list is not exhaustive.

- **Book and Journal Publishing:** The graduates of library and information technology

with proper entrepreneurial education will be better disposed to undertake ventures in print, electronic and online book and journal publishing as content creators or developers, content assessors, content editors, content publishers)

- **Development of Library Application software:** Graduates of library and information technology can develop library application software to manage specific tasks in libraries and information centres. They can also develop digital library software and library websites to boost the web presence and global access to library contents.
- **Production and sale of Library equipment:** Equipment like audiovisual, metal shelf, bookstands etcetera could be provided.
- **Information brokerage and consultancy services:** They could be involved in information re-packaging services for fee.
- **Bookselling and Book-vending business:** With their knowledge of entrepreneurship, they could open bookshops and sell print and e-books print and computer stationery. They could also liaise with libraries to supply books, journals and other periodicals to institutions.
- **Business centres and cyber café:** They could open business centres where computer related activities such as typesetting, computer training, graphic designs, photocopying, digital printing services are carried out and cyber café where internet services are provided.
- **Computer hardware maintenance:** Knowledge of computer assembly, repair and maintenance puts the graduates in a position to be self-employed. The opening of a computer hardware component sales and repair parts outlet further enhances the success of a computer maintenance business
- **Establishing of Digital Library:** Library and information technology graduate can establish model digital libraries where patrons are charged registration and access fees.
- **Bibliographic/Biographic/Lexicographic compilation:** Graduates of library and information technology can leverage on ICT to compile and produce bibliographies in areas of insufficient coverage by libraries or commercially viable subjects for sale. Compiling biographies, directories and dictionaries can be more successfully undertaken by graduates of library and information technology because of their training and background.
- **Record management:** Graduates of library and information technology can take advantage of their education to participate in the digital record management cycle of identification, capture, organisation, management, utilisation and archiving for organizations and individuals
- **Indexing and abstracting services:** Graduates of library and information technology can be employed as metadata database analysts, designers and managers, cataloguers in libraries, full-time or free-lance editors, indexers and abstractors in journal publishing, or they could float print, electronic and online journals in the field and employ others.

### **Optimum Productivity for Library and Information Technology Practitioners**

Productivity is the hallmark of man's existence. An individual, group of individuals, organisation, group of organisations, nation and group of nations that are not productive are heading towards death and extinction. All men including library and information technology practitioners must be productive to justify the investment made on them in training. To succeed in an atmosphere of global economic recession characterised with dwindling job opportunities, library and information technology practitioners must be productive. If they are productive (either as employee in organizations, self-employed or employer) they would be profitable.

Profitability would definitely enhance their continuous relevance and employability in the information age that is replete with rapid changes. If they are innovative, they would be creative. Creativity would lead to productivity and would enhance their continuous employability and relevance in the information world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

### Conclusion

From the fore-going discussion, it is apposite to conclude that entrepreneurial skill acquisition and utilization coupled with entrepreneurial education remains a potent weapon that could be tactfully used to conquer the scourge of unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria and across the globe. When library and information technology graduates arm themselves with all the entrepreneurial skills that they acquired in the course of their training, unemployment would be far from them. Rather than seeking for jobs, library and information technology graduates would not only become innovators in their various employing information/knowledge institutions but self-employed and employers of labour.

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