

**LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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Abstract

University-based Library School is a full-fledged department under faculty/school of education in any university that runs Diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate programme in librarianship. Writing about the problems of Library Schools in Nigeria is like writing about the problems and prospects of Library Education in Nigeria. This paper thus examined the problems militating against the development of Library and information science education in university-based Library Schools in Nigeria. These problems include: attitude of government and Nigerian societies, funding, resources curriculum and unstable academic calendar, etc. Despite these problems, there are some emerging trends in library schools and the profession in Nigerian Universities: viz availability of ICT facilities (though inadequate), continuing education, employment opportunities for graduates of Library Schools in Banks, Oil firms, industries, and information centers etc. Recommendation for future improvement were proffered.

Introduction

In Nigeria, formal training of library personnel commenced when the institute of librarianship was established in the then University College Ibadan in 1959. The establishment of the institute was as a result of a study embarked upon by Harold Lancour which was sponsored by Carnegie Corporation. It admitted the first set of students in 1960 and started with Masters degree programme.

In less than a decade, Carnegie Corporation sponsored another study on library needs for Northern Nigeria under the leadership of F.A Sharr. Olden (1980) posits that Sharr's report on the Library needs of Northern Nigeria pointed out that the area had no organized professionals and little library training and recommended that a Library School be established at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria which came into existence in 1968. There was a controversy between MLS programme of the university of Ibadan Library School and BLS of the Ahmadu bello university (ABU) Zaria Library School, Olden (1980). Ahmadu Bello University Library School Zaria introduced MLS in 1969/70 and 1973/74 session; Ph.D 1983/84 session and Long Vacation Term/Training in 1985/86 session on part-time basis; (Omoniwa) (2003). Other University-based Library Schools started springing-up e.g Bayero University Kano (1977) University of Maiduguri (1978) and Library Association, Borno State Chapter, 2006

Library Studies Unit of imo state university (1981), and University of Nigeria Nsukka (1983). Dawha (2002) observed that by 1990s the following university-based Library Schools were established: they include Edo state university, Ekpoma (1991) Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka (1991), Enugu state university of Science and Technology (1991), and Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, Ibadan (1990).

Other University-based Library Schools that were established include-University of Uyo, Federal University of Technology, Minna (2001) and Madona University. The increase in number of Library Schools in Nigeria according to Alhassan (2004) should not lower qualitative training of librarians thereby maintaining "high standard of professional practice".

Problems of Library Education/Library Schools In Nigeria

Scholars in the field of librarianship have enumerated problems facing library Education/Library Schools in Nigeria Universities. These problems are hereby itemized and discussed which include Funding, staffing, resources, curriculum etc.

Attitude of Government and the Nigeria Societies:-

The Nigerian government has not accorded much recognition in terms of scholarship to library education. In terms of government scholarship, the amount given to students of librarianship cannot be compared to those of medicine, engineering, law and accountancy e.t.c Ochogwu (1988) viewed this situation in the following words:- It is a known fact that until recently many state governments in Nigeria did not award scholarship to students in the field of librarianship. Examples include Imo, Anambra and Bendel states, to mention but a few cases. In case, where scholarships are awarded the stipends attached to such award cannot be compared to those of other professional fields such as Medicine, Law and Accountancy.....

Interview with undergraduate students of FUT Minna library school revealed that as at 2004/2005 session, students of librarianship from Niger, Kaduna and Anambra states received low stipend (scholarship allowance) as compared to those of Engineering and Medicine. Critical analysis of a scholarship award to students by Chevron (2002/2003) and (2003/2004) shows that librarianship students are not beneficiaries but those of other professional fields mentioned earlier.

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding of library education has been a major obstacle. Library schools in Nigerian universities are grossly under funded in terms of setting up and equipping of departmental libraries, ICT laboratories, organizing continuing education programme and carrying out of research. Adequate funds are needed to acquire instructional materials, information resources, carry out researches, organize continuing education programme etc. Ochogwu (1988) is of the view that:

Library education and librarianship as a whole cannot develop without adequate fund to train information professionals, buy facilities that are crucial to the profession.....

The inadequate funding of library education/Library Schools emanated from the meager budgetary allocation to education sector by the Federal Government which is not in line with UNESCO agreement. Thus, Daily Trust April 27, (2006) posits that: What Education System got in 2001 was 7 percent of the budget; 6.1 percent in 2002; 4.75 percent in 2003 and 4.54 percent in 2004. This is a far cry from the 25 percent allocation to education under the UNESCO agreement on funding of education to which Nigeria is a signatory.....

Staffing Situation

Library Schools in Nigerian Universities are facing acute shortage of teaching staff both in quantity and to some extent in quality. Most Library Schools do not have adequate teaching staff and this has led to recruiting or hiring of part-time lecturers, (Olden 1980), (Ayo 2004) and (Opara2006)

In another dimension, between 1998/99 and 2003/2004 session, no student was admitted to ABU Library School to pursue postgraduate programme simply because of inadequate high level academic manpower (Ph.D holders) that are capable of teaching and supervising higher degree research. Federal University of Technology Minna Library School which was established during 2001/2002 session is in search of more Ph.D holders of the rank of Associate professor and Professor that are capable of supervising higher degree research; It is no wonder that Aguolu (2002) states that; Nigerian Library Schools generally suffer from lack of staff and in the newly established ones; the shortage of staff is so acute that there is an unusually heavy reliance upon part-time lecturers.

Resources

Resources according to Ochogwu (1992) can be classified into 3 main types, namely: Information materials, material resources and physical facilities.. In terms of ICT facilities (computer, internet etc) none of the university-based library schools in Nigeria has adequate and well equipped ICT laboratory (Akintunde 2006).

Balarabe (2005) studied the extent of availability and adequacy of ICT facilities in the first- 5 library schools in Nigerian universities and revealed that ICT facilities were available but inadequate This shows that effective practical ICT cannot be guaranteed since the population of students is more than the available ICT facilities e.g. computer. Adequate resources to support teaching and learning processes are lacking in most Library Schools. Effective teaching and research in librarianship cannot be carried out; this is because departmental library, adequate ICT laboratory and Audio-visual materials centre are lacking in our Library Schools. Thus looking at the composition of library science department, Ochogwu (1992) agree with Nwakoby's observation which states that: Ideally, the department of library studies should be housed in its own building, equipped with classrooms, a large lecture theatre, a seminar room, offices, laboratories, a library and a mini-computer centre.

Curriculum: Theory versus Practical Skills and Non-Harmonization of Courses

Teaching and learning that go on in our Library Schools are more of theoretical rather than practical exercise. The teaching of Library and Information Technology ought to take more hours of practical. Only small fraction is given for practical which should be as a result of lack of adequate computer and ICT specialists. This situation has led to the production graduates of library/Technology who cannot effectively operate computer or any other information technology equipment. It is in line with this phenomenon that Gwarzo (2003) states that: Practitioners, especially in Nigeria, are of the opinion that Library Schools are not producing technically sound graduates that could participate actively in the information age. Majority of graduates lack practical knowledge of basic equipment found in libraries like computers, microform readers etc. The curriculum tends to emphasis theoretical aspects of IT rather than its practical aspect.

There is also lack of harmonization of courses taught in most of Library Schools in Nigerian universities. One course is been offered at different levels in different library schools which shows that the curricula are not uniform. Opara (2006) studied the ICT curriculum of 2 university-based library schools (ABSU and DELSU), and the result shows that the curriculum of the two(2) library schools are not uniform. For example, ABSU offers Automation of Library and Information Centre, as a 400 Level course while DELSU offers it as Computer Application to Library Processes I and II in 200Level.

Unstable Academic Calendar

The incessant unrest on university campus as a result of union political/religious crisis prolong the duration of programmes. For example in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in 1995/1996 session there was crisis involving an association called Northern Element Coalition and university management as well as ASUU Versus University Management/ Authority respectively which led to the closure of the University for a complete session. Also, the 2002/2003 academic session in FUT Minna was cancelled due to students crisis (Information Flash 2005). The years students spend in the school become extended over the normal period of study. All these situation virtually affects the quality of students produced.

Trends in Nigerian Library Schools and the Profession

Encouraging innovations are gradually taking place in our library schools and the profession as a whole. Among these are:

- (1) Continuing Education:- The NLA has been embarking on continuing education for both the practitioners, educators and the students. (Balla, 1999). This includes the organization of annual conferences, seminars and workshops.
- (2) Most of the Library Schools in Nigerian Universities have ICT laboratories/ facilities (though inadequate). Such as ABU, BUk, UNIMAID, FUT Minna, Uni. Ibadan, Delta state University, Just to mention a few.

- (3) The Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) has come up stream licensing dully qualified librarians thus regulating entrants into the profession.
- (4) Library schools have started making concerted effort to run the BLS,MLS and PhD program despite the Herculean task ahead. Beside Ibadan Library school, other universities(DELSU,BUK,UYO,UNIMAID etc) have started running BLS,MLS and PhD programmes in Librarianship
- (5) Review of the curriculum by the library schools is such that would enable graduates to be gainfully employed in Government ministries and parastatals, as well as private sectors. There is no organization in the country that does not need Librarians, Information Officers, Information Analysts, Record Managers.

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