PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE FOR SELF-RELIANCE: PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LIS GRADUATES IN NIGERIA

EJEDAFIRU, EFE FRANCIS (CLN)

And

TOYO, DAVID OGHENEVERWOGAGA

Department of Library and Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study examined the need to develop appropriate entrepreneurial skills for library and information science graduates in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education provides a framework for the development of knowledge; skills and attitude for success in business and at the same time a key to self-reliance. The imbalance between LIS graduates and employment opportunities is so wide; as a result, there are high unemployment problems, which have resulted into many social vices in the country. It is on record that LIS education has failed to equip its graduates with the practical skills for self-reliance and productivity while in training. Hence, the needs for entrepreneurship education for self-empowerment of LIS graduates were discussed. The paper also examines self-employment opportunities for LIS graduates which the researchers believe will reduce unemployment crisis and instantly boost the nation’s economy.

INTRODUCTION

In all intent and purpose, all entrepreneurial efforts are geared towards profit making and also to bridge the gap of unemployment. Nwaka (2009) opined that entrepreneurship
education prepares an individual for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work as well as preparation for responsible citizenship and a tool for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and a way of alleviating poverty for individuals. In general terms, an entrepreneur has traditionally been described as an individual who takes risks and start something new (Babalola, 2011). It is pertinent to observe that a good entrepreneur is expected to be ready to take responsibility for his or her actions, bear risk, take right decision and be resourceful. Entrepreneurship in library and information science is about developing attitudes, behavior of library and information science practitioners at the individual level in pursuit of profit oriented approach. Stevenson (2007) defines entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity through innovative leverage of resources that for the most part are not controlled internally. Entrepreneurship and self-reliance is the ability of an individual to rely on his/her own abilities and efforts; that is, the person is independent (Idiaghe, 2011). She went further to emphasized that education in relation to self-reliance and entrepreneurship is the type of education that trains a person to be self-reliance, functional, realistic, productive, pragmatic and reliable, which capacity building of an individual is what the functional education does to him/her.

With the influence of technology, the library and information professional of the 21st century has assume different attributes and devise new approaches to the library operations in order to cope with the present global audience, and at the same time tackle the menace of unemployment. Any LIS graduate who is equipped with the relevant entrepreneurial skills, values and ideals would venture into small scale business such as information brokerage, consultancy services, selective dissemination of information, selling of books, information packaging, sales of library materials, sales and repairs of ICT components, design of websites etc.

Observations have shown that Nigeria educational system is in crisis, hence there are frequent cases of youth restiveness, armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping etc. These social maladies are not far from being associated with unemployment which is as a result of youth not being given necessary skills either in school or places of work to enable them become either self employed or employees of an institution. On a general note, Ehirheme and Ekpeyong (2012) revealed that majority of Nigerian graduates who completed the mandatory National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) in the last five (5) years remain unemployed. Corroborating this, Ekere and Ekere (2012) posits that this situation portrays failure of the nation’s entire education system and underlines an inherent mismatch between the type of education received by Nigerian graduates and the needs of government agencies, private industrial establishments and other employers of labour. These analyses have necessitated the introduction of entrepreneurial education in the curricular of all higher institutions in Nigeria by National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). There is therefore, the urgent need to prepare the LIS graduates of Nigeria’s higher institutions for the challenges and benefits of self-employment.

Today’s dynamic environment demands that library and information practitioners adapt and renew themselves continually to succeed. The global economic recession “meltdown” since 2007 has not only forced millions of graduates into unemployment, but has also made many graduates to redesign, restructure and restrategize in response to the challenges. It has come to the notice of all that the only veritable approach to economic freedom is through entrepreneurship. Hence, efforts should be made to produce LIS graduates who will not hinge their hopes on employment by Federal, state or local government to the production of graduates who can create wealth. The vehicle towards the realization of that
goal is the introduction of entrepreneurship education into library and information science curriculum to promote the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by would be LIS graduates. According to Bassey and Archibong (2005), the goal of entrepreneurship education is intended to empower our graduates irrespective of their areas of specialization with skills that will enable them to secure jobs in the public sector.

Fig 1: Adaptation of Hypothetical Model for Entrepreneurship Education and System (Akinseinde, 2011).
Figure 1 presents a conceptual model for entrepreneurship education in library and information science. The model presents an opportunity for potential LIS graduate to become actual entrepreneur and also an avenue to embrace the R6 solution to retrain, retools, redesigned, re-evaluate, review and repackaged him/her in preparation for self employment opportunities using appropriate teaching methods. With this knowledge and skill, the LIS graduate can identify business opportunities and develop entrepreneurial ability. Followed by implementation plans and activities is the need to evaluate and monitor entrepreneurial activities to determine experiences emanating from the various trainings.

LIS graduates need to be exposed to complete entrepreneurship education courses, which in turn will help to develop entrepreneurship abilities. This calls for concerted efforts by all stake-holders most especially professional bodies, which includes Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and Library schools to continually organize seminars, conferences and workshops on the best methods to inculcate entrepreneurship education into LIS curriculum. It is important to caution that entrepreneurship education should not be scattered in lead paper and keynote speeches of conferences, class lectures and general studies (Akinseinde, 2011). There is the need to have systematic course planning that will produce specific effects of entrepreneurial work of the graduates (Chang & Sung, 2009).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR LIS GRADUATES

What makes entrepreneurship education for LIS graduates stand out clearly is the focus on realization of opportunities with profit making as the ultimate. The transition from traditional library operations and services to advanced digital libraries and services as a result of information technologies calls for holistic approach, because new methods and techniques have enlarged the frontiers of LIS. With the infusion of technology in all spheres of life, unemployment rate is growing at a higher rate, while more jobs go unfilled largely because “many of the unemployed lacks the skills needed today as a result of technological progress (Campbell, 2012).

Effective and efficient LIS education and training for entrepreneurship require a driving spirit. The driving spirit should be embedded in the LIS training expressed as personal qualities or attributes that are mutually exclusive. These attributes are:

- Creativity and initiative, for all kinds of ideas.
- Innovation ensuring value in selecting ideas.
- Entrepreneurship thereby able to develop ventures from innovative ideas (Nwadiani, 2011).

At this junction, one may wish to pull some puzzles “How much of the listed attributes can be achieved or seem to be attributes of LIS graduates? Is there any of them that can be achieved outside entrepreneurship education? The contention is that ‘Entrepreneurship education is the life wire of every nation. If with entrepreneurship education Nigeria is still faced with the level of insecurity, high level of unemployment and other vices, then the issue should be whether we have gotten it right with the quality of our entrepreneurship education, and not whether entrepreneurship education is the solution. It is the contention of these authors that LIS education alone is handicapped as the sole provider of the means of economic, social and industrial development of graduates. Entrepreneurship education as conceptualized by the World Bank (2010) “is the building of knowledge and skills either about or for the purpose of entrepreneurship generally, as part of recognized education.
program at the primary, secondary and tertiary level educational institutions (Ikoya, 2011). Hence, sincere entrepreneurship education policy must be put in place in Nigeria. Ojukwu (1999) “opined that entrepreneurship education is indispensable for economic and social development of Nigerian”. Global research trends affirm that entrepreneurship education have become the bedrock of every nation’s industrialization. People are now willing to be creative and innovative and to identify, establish and run their own ventures instead of waiting for government alone to provide jobs for everybody (Anyanwu, Oduagwu, Ossai-onah and Amaechi, 2013). There is therefore, the need to encourage LIS graduates or library and information professionals to develop descriptive insight into what the ideal personal attributes, personality and characteristics ought to be. Entrepreneurship education should prepare the high performing library and information professional of the 21st century with a hyper-sales person, who constantly pushes the frontiers of knowledge for competitive advantage.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR SELF-EMPOWERMENT OF LIS GRADUATES

Entrepreneurship is a programme that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance and national development (Eke, Igwesi and Orji, 2011). Fundamental to entrepreneurship is innovation, which translates to a new method of production, new markets or the setting up of a new organization or the breaking up of an existing one (Ejiogu and Nwajiaba, 2012). Hence LIS graduates need to develop personal competency which will equip them with skills, attitudes and values that will spur them to acquire practical skills and experience needed to be self-employed and to be self-reliant, through the management of small-scale business.

Global researches affirm the correlation between entrepreneurship skills and creation of innovation, wealth and employment. Government agencies, captains of industries and other employers of labour prefer to recruit people who can make use of their talents to bring innovation and add value to their workplace (Nnadozie, Akanwa and Nnadozie, 2013). One may ask, at this junction, whether the role of the LIS graduates of the 21st century would change. One would say, yes, the role of these professionals by and large, has changed and on a higher gear too with new tools, new skills, new working environment and higher responsibilities, worst still with high rate of unemployment. That is why Igbeka (2008) charges that “librarians should work towards establishing business of their own”. It is pertinent to note that entrepreneurship behaviors are learnt, develop and practiced. Hence, there is no hiding place for any LIS graduates who will not embrace the R6 solution to retrain, retool, redesigned, re-evaluate, review and repackaged him/herself in preparation for self employment and participation in the world of work.

Entrepreneurship education embraced skill acquisition in creative thinking, product development, marketing, leadership training and wealth creation. Plumly, Marshall, Eastman, Iyer, Stanley, and Boatwright (2008) opined that entrepreneurship and small business has been acknowledged as a fundamental component of economic growth and health. Since, globalization is dictating the economy of every nation. LIS graduates need to be given core entrepreneurial trainings in relation to library and information services so that, at graduation, they can sustain themselves instead of scrambling for white-collar jobs.
CNN reporter, Christiana Amanpour notes: information is life, information is power, information is security, information is money, and information is business. If these are true in this wired world, then we do not need a magician or fortune teller to emphasize the inextricable relationship between information and self-empowerment. If human resources are not optimally developed, the nation optimally is underdeveloped and one vital indicator for development is information (Achebe, 2013). Since businesses are willing to pay the price and when dealing with those who recognize and treat information as commodity, efforts should therefore be geared toward profit making. Hence LIS graduates must be prepared to take advantage of these golden opportunities. Therefore, a holistic process of planning, pricing, promotion and distribution of information goods and services to present and potential users must be developed.

Many scholars have written on various aspects of librarianship to which LIS graduate of different cadre can apply their peculiar competence and entrepreneurship education. Levine (2002), Igbeka (2008) and Ekere and Ekere (2012), discussed many aspect of information brokerage which the library and information science graduate can delve into. In another development, Anyanwu (2013) identify the opportunities available to LIS graduate as follows:

- Publishing
- Development of computer software
- Production and sale of library equipment
- Information brokerage and consultancy services
- Bookselling business
- Operation of business centre and cyber business and
- Computer maintenance

There is great need for the curricular of LIS schools to be revised to incorporate entrepreneurship education in order for LIS graduates to embrace these and many more opportunities. These can only be achieved through a self sustaining educational system in which LIS student will be equipped with the skills, attitudes and values that are necessary for improved library services and coping with increasing entrepreneurship opportunities created by technologies.

CONCLUSION

Since the would-be LIS graduates are expected to acquire necessary skills that will enable them to meet the needs of society. It is therefore, pertinent to believe that entrepreneurship education will help them to harness their potentials and also serve as a channel to job creation and self-reliance.
REFERENCES