

The LIS Educator: Nurturing for Strategic Learning Experiences

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Abstract:

Education adds value, no doubt. It imparts good practices and strategies for survival in a competitive world. Hence, LIS educators have roles to play in nurturing the connection between the classroom and the real world experiences of engaging the masses. Smart educators always structure programs that mix, mash and excite. Taking ownership of library and information services through development of curriculum is the first step of training and education. The authors have been in dialogue where colleagues stated that LIS is boring and unexciting. This affects teaching and training, thus, creating librarians that seem too reserved for comfort. This study highlighted the experiences of LIS educators in integrating strategies in library schools, outcome of the experiences, lessons learnt and implications of the study. It was a qualitative study from Madonna University, Nigeria and Ignatius Aguru University of Education, Rumuorlumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The instruments used were dialogues, focal group discussion, talk shows and presentation. The strategies were implemented from 2017 to 2019. Results showed that the LIS educators incorporated world book day, world literacy day, world language day, human rights anniversary, IFLA global vision, motivational and ICT trainings into the curriculum. It was discovered that streaming and initiating these activities stimulated interest in career charting as well as attracted more recognition and acknowledgement to LIS departments. The lessons learnt included craving from students and colleagues for more engaging programs, secret admiration from other departments and awareness creation for inclusive learning program. Indeed, updating the training and LIS education are very important in building radical career ready

professionals. LIS is a serious business, thus, educators in this field have every need to keep the motor moving with stimulating dialogue and practices.

Keywords: Education, learning experiences, library schools, LIS Educator, strategy, training

Introduction

Education adds value, imbues respect and dignity because it creates advantages for adoptable changes. LIS educators ensure the steering of sustainable strategies by making learning enriching in order to perpetuate the great discipline that has all the sense of worth in information dissemination. This is a competitive world where adaptability and re-branding influence on the environment (Lorenz, 2014). The notion makes it critical for LIS educators to continue to re-learn, strategize and innovate avenues of sustaining their students with exciting, stimulating methodologies. This profession, which has existed with all the beautiful principles, needs to keep standing and the people that must ensure this are the LIS educators in the library schools, in their departments, in their different study platforms and in their community development. Hence the tenets of LIS education has become imperative for the survival and development of new information for students who need to be equipped with the necessary skills for support and all time quality service delivery (Alleyne, 2017 and Osuchukwu, 2016).

It is on this view that the LIS educator must brace up in all frontiers. It is not just about the courses lined up in the curriculum but the delivery, the fire in the teaching, the souls being stirred and the mindsets being changed, right in the classroom. In other words, an enthusiastic LIS educator is a great asset for no other professional degree platform focuses on the combination of information, people, needs, value, learning and technology (Bertot and Sarin, 2016). This is LIS in its entirety and what the essential change advocates. Besides, the scenario in the global trend has made anyone who is not measuring up to be beaten and overtaken by the change. A good educator does not admit defeat; rather, he re-strategizes with enriching classes that assure total quality delivery. This line of thought must have made Alleyne (2017) to state the correlation that for LIS schools to escape extinction, there must be a strategic plan to diversify.

In Nigeria, LIS education started in the 1960s. Today, it is offered in various tertiary institutions like Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities. Many LIS educators have recommended invigorating curricula contents for the training facilities based on the needs and the prevailing conditions of the socio-cultural environment (Diso and Njoku, 2007) and for contemporary innovations (Akwang, 2017 and Salubi, 2017). It is a good point that Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and National Association of Library and Information science Educators (NALISE) are making giant strides in restructuring and shaping the stories of LIS schools in Nigeria (Akinde and [Adetimirin](#), 2018). The need to add contemporary innovations in the LIS profession is imperative to enable graduates to be globally competitive (Salubi, 2017). The onus lies on the LIS educators to be proactive professionals who are taking actions in nurturing the students into smart, well-informed future librarians. This study highlighted the experiences of LIS educators in the context of nurturing for strategic learning.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to highlight the experiences of LIS educators in the context of nurturing for strategic learning. Specifically it:

1. highlighted the experiences of LIS educators in integrating strategies in library schools
2. looked at the outcomes of the experiences
3. identified the lessons learnt
4. pointed out the implication of the study.

Statement of the problem

The survival of any entity is paramount which makes it imperative to adopt new strategies and refused to be extinct. LIS is not different from other disciplines that want to meet the ever-changing needs of the society. The world recognizes fast thinkers, pro activists and hard-core professionals who make things happen. Whatever made this profession look like they churn out docile, soft, timid professionals? This non-fighting mode has to stop to give way to radical and aggressive professionals whose every sense focuses on what trends, what is new, who has it, where does it happen and how can it be grabbed? The best place to change this disturbing inclination is the library school with the LIS educators. The library schools need to reform, rebirth and rebrand students into viable career professionals. The LIS educators have the power to turn the library schools not only as a place of learning what are in the curriculum but a welcoming space to bridge the digital divide where every student can create and experiment (Bartot and Sarin, 2016). Hence, the educators need to project strategic learning for wholesome professionalism. This study looked into the strategic experiences of LIS educators in nurturing students for competitive advantage.

Literature review

Educators are important not just in LIS but in every human discipline. The National Academy of Sciences (2019) stated that nearly everyone now accepts the premise that teachers make a difference in the lives of their students. Based on this, the LIS educators adopt strategies, mix and navigate facets that ensure quality educational system (Akinde and Adetimirin, 2018). As the teachers update their knowledge, they also turn the classroom to exciting platforms where students who will be professionals derive satisfaction in their learning. It requires commitment, determination and sheer dexterity to match the needs of the students and come out tops as champions. The acquisition of multidisciplinary knowledge places greater emphasis on training and fully articulated learning programs to meet the requisite of the professionals (Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011). Perhaps, this made International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (2018) to set up the goal on the standards of educators to be learner, leader, citizen, collaborator, designer, facilitator and analyst. These are who LIS educators meant to be.

Therefore, the LIS educator brings to the table the values of the profession and understanding information in everyday life, focusing on multiple literacies, learning and collaborating spaces, meeting technology needs, competencies and facilitating open data (Bartot and Sarin (2016). What he needs in large doses are education and training to impart knowledge on maker spaces, Google, smartphones proliferation and all activities on and outside the web to keep the trail blazing (iSchool of Information Science, 2016). As libraries do not have a monopoly on providing access to information anymore, Yadav (2018) stressed the need for LIS educators to

emphasize their values as providers of unique (digitized) content and as service providers, rather than as providers of published information that can be found elsewhere.

Studies have shown that many LIS educators and Library Schools are taking action and driving the change in initiating dialogues for all time LIS education. For instance, Science and society (Yadav, 2018), merger (Miksch, 2016) with other departments, curriculum restructuring (Hider, et al, 2011) partnership (Shumaker, 2012) diversity and inclusion (Alleyne, 2017 and Tang, et al 2017) have been adjudged as strategies for future LIS education and training. Diversity is truly needed in blending the desired change for survival. Similarly, Shane-Scale (2009) informed that DLIS experiences in the Caribbean have been responsive to international trends in library education and manpower requirement, upgrading and restructuring programs to meet demands. Yadav (2018) also added that LIS education is reaching out to a wide variety of faculty specializations. The indication is that the educators recognize, students would no longer be taught that, it is enough to stand behind a desk waiting to serve but to create enriching services and taking them to where they are needed.

Perhaps, the best qualities an LIS educator can have are willingness and readiness to try new teaching strategies. Kampen (2019) stated that he constantly renews himself as a professional on his quest to provide students with the highest quality of education possible. This teacher has no fear of learning new teaching strategies or incorporating new technologies into lessons. This sums up the initiative to add to the existing learning with topical global dialogues for participation from the classroom. The new analyses, integration of scientific and social standpoint (Kampen, 2019), growth mindset (Dweck, 2015) are what library schools need in nurturing strong willed professionals. Lankes, et al (2016) strongly pointed out that librarians can be radical positive change agents in their communities, dedicated to learning and making a difference. This learning must start with the educators to emphasize that professionals participate actively in the new trends and dialogues for change.

Clearly, change in library education is the key. This explained the reason Bartot and Sarin (2016) stated that libraries have been at the centre of social justice, change, and innovation, offering services that engage, educate, and empower their users. This description presupposes that LIS educators widen their scope to integrate real activities and global trends in the classroom as part of curriculum. Whatever happens to fifth Law of Library Science – Library is a growing organism? The growing organism happens in the classrooms as well. It does not reside in the libraries alone. Thus, the educators must bring in activity of international days, IFLA global vision, National Library activity, open government, civic engagement, human rights, democratic values and ideals (IFLA, 2018). They students need to improve on what they learnt in the library school not learning them as fresh ideas on-the-job. Non-integration of real life activities and global trends as part of the curriculum might have made LIS profession to be so boring without initiatives to infuse interesting activities.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study from experiences of LIS educators from Madonna University, Nigeria and Ignatius Aguru University of Education, Rumuorlumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The instruments used were dialogues, focal group discussion (FGD), talk shows and presentation. The FGD took place at the library schools, respectively consisting of nine participants at Ignatius Aguru University of Education, Rumuorlumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State and 6 participants from Madonna University, Nigeria. The initiatives started from 2017

to date and have become annual events in both universities. All the participants were LIS educators of the universities, understudy. There were series of dialogues and talk shows with the students at every session. The events used were motivational sessions, International Day of Mother Tongue, World Book Day, Global Hand Washing Day, World Literacy Day, Human Rights Day, IFLA Global Vision, SDGs and Nigerian Library Week. All the activities were integrated in the curriculum and executed in the LIS departments with students' full participation. The results of the learning experiences were presented in logical framework and tables

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of the participants

S/N	Sex	LIS Educators	Number
1	F	Professor	1
1.	F	Ph.D.	3
2	M	Ph.D.	5
3.	F	MLIS	3
4.	M	MLIS	3
Total			15

The table shows that fifteen LIS Educators were involved in the experiences of nurturing and building future librarians with strategic innovations. The different categories of LIS Educators showed 1 Professor, 8 Ph.D holders and 6 MLIS holders. They all have the same goal – to stimulate learning in library schools.

Table 2: Experiences and the outcomes

Strategies Integrated	Reasons for the engagement	When conducted	Target participants
World book day: Simulation of reading aloud and essentials of reading	To stimulate learning and nurture ideas for future practices	April 23 from 2017	Lecturers, staff and students Librarians
World literacy day: Talk show and dialogue on roles and achievements of literacy	To impart skills on speaking and inclusive participation of host communities	September 8 from 2017	LIS educators and students
Mother tongue day: Space creation for all participants to contribute in their local languages	To create ideas on team building and collaboration with other groups on indigenous knowledge	February 21 2018	Lecturers, staff and students Librarians
Global hand washing day: Awareness and simulation of practices for hand washing	To impart ideas and enjoin human face in social services	October 15	University and host communities, schools and park
IFLA global trend: Participation on global vision, dialogue, learning and sharing on IFLA global advocacy document	To share and inculcate participation and contribution to professional information	September, 2018	LIS educators and students

Libraries for human rights: Knowledge on rights, talk shows and sharing	To showcase versatility of LIS education on social justices and impart ideas for service delivery	December 10, 2018	Lecturers, staff and students, Librarians
National Library Week and policy and information LIS students participation on Library Association conferences	To create awareness on library profession and innovative practices, ICT training To incorporate the students in identifying with the professional associations	October from 2017 July and December from 2017	Lecturers, staff and students Librarians
Motivational day: Talk show, dialogue, capacity building, questions and answers	To enlighten, enrich, stimulate, empower as well as make LIS students feel loved and cherished	Every quarter	LIS educators, students and invited guests
SDGs and AU 2063: Talk shows, dialogues, learning and sharing	To share global knowledge and empower LIS students to facilitate to groups and communities	Every semester	LIS educators and students

Results showed that the LIS educators incorporated world book day, world literacy day, world language day, human rights anniversary, IFLA global vision, SDG and AU 2063, motivational day and library week. These events were executed in LIS Departments in both universities.

Outcome of the LIS strategic activities

During the activities and focus group discussion, the following results were recorded:

- Active participation of LIS educators and students
- Successful streaming and initiating of the activities as parts of LIS education and training to stimulate interest in career charting
- Recognition and acknowledgement of LIS department as well as space creation for effective coaching and mentoring
- Improved respects and regards to LIS Educators and students
- Interests to submit and present papers at the State Chapter of Nigerian Library Association Conference by LIS students
- Improved self-confidence on LIS students
- Desire for capacity building and readiness to innovate more programs for LIS education

Lessons learnt

From the discussion, the lessons learnt included:

- Students' desire for more social and real life activities within LIS practices
- LIS educators' innate ideas opened up when challenged
- LIS education has wide scopes and contents to exhale to everyday relevance
- LIS students simply need a push to display intelligence and technical know how
- The processes of education and training for LIS are more practical with human face and social services
- LIS educators became more daring while students became more knowledgeable and proud of LIS

Discussion

The characteristics of the LIS educators (Table 1) show the active participation of mentors and coaches in driving the change in library schools. It relates to IFLA (2018) recommendation to create a strong and united library field powering literate, informed and participative societies. The indication is that it brought everyone to the table to display assertive mind set and sharing of ideas in enhancing the library schools.

Adopting the strategies that touch the core of information services indicates the stimulation of interest, stepping out and taking action. These are the theories of change in action that discard the seemingly docile nature of some LIS professionals. It implies that the LIS educators can transform literacy, facilitate access to information and training which buttress the goals of the standard of educator which ISTE (2018) stated to be learner, leader, citizen, collaborator, designer, facilitator and analyst. Certainly, the LIS educator is in the best position to inculcate desire for information and real-life social justice learning. Just think about all the trends recommended by IFLA, the international days to be remembered and all the activities from world acclaimed organizations and agencies. All these are learning strategies to be packaged and incorporated in the classrooms.

It is clear from the outcomes that things are turning around for LIS educators, students and the library profession. The fear of the unknown can be demystified by the actions of the educators. With that, the students can easily rise up to the tempo and take up their spaces among their peers on relevance of their profession. Again, if the educators could attain this level of acknowledgement and recommendation on campuses, the students can achieve and facilitate any access to information in whichever sector they get into.

Great lessons are appreciated when learning actually take place. That fact that the students' desire more social and real-life activities with the ideas of the LIS educators shows radical positive change (Lankes, et al 2016) that can happen in the library schools which can be taken beyond the classroom learning. In other words, the lessons learnt indicate analysis of strong willed professionals dedicated to learning and making the difference for LIS will never be a bore when proper ideas keep the motor running.

Implication of the study

Library and information science has existed for years in many countries and in different tertiary institutions. There seems to be something about the profession and education that makes people waive LIS away without much ado. The findings have highlighted the aspects of integrating global trends and international days to project human face and stimulate programs in the curriculum. If LIS educators pretend that everything is good with their teaching and students, their departments may continue to lose students to other viable departments. Since most people want to identify with success, this is a good time to become radical with LIS and show the good prospects of action filled library schools in order to gain what might have probably been lost.

Conclusion and recommendation

The world is changing, and the human disciplines are tailored to match the dynamic transformations. LIS education cannot remove itself from the global revolutions. The 21st century education commands training, learning and sharing. It demands, dissipating the tradition of "hush hush" with vocal ideologies. Therefore, strong identification with global

trends and participation on dialogues on topical issues are needed in LIS training to produce the career ready professionals for the services, the world desires. The training must start from the library school to the workstation for effective nurturing of champions in information services.

Based on the findings of the study, the recommendations were:

1. The LIS educators must be poised to trail the blaze with learning experiences and make it happen in their library schools with their students.
2. Trainings, learning and re-learning must be regular tools for LIS educators in sharing ideas and building their capacities to delist timidity and fear of public reactions on facilitation of access to information.
3. The time has come for LIS educators to go all out and initiate programs that make the students feel good and proud of their departments.
4. LIS educators can collaborate with colleagues and groups in strategizing programs that enrich the curriculum for learning.
5. The educators must never lose sight of assessing their curriculum and navigating the global trend for best practices.
6. As teachers, leaders, mentors and coaches, the educators should continue to push for prowess in order to support students' empowerment and success in making them the ready professionals.

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