STEPPING UP INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMMES BY THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) EDUCATORS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

Purpose: *The paper examined the challenges and prospects for stepping up information literacy (IL) programmes by Library and Information Science educators for entrepreneurship and employability.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *A conceptual/exploratory approach was adopted for the study, whereby the authors developed a conceptual framework to better appreciate the terms: information literacy, entrepreneurship and employability. Related literature were also reviewed on the the role of LIS educators in promoting employability through Information Literacy (IL) and IL programmes that are available in LIS profession. Various databases were consulted ranging from advanced google search, journal databases, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations*

Findings: *The study found out that there are available information literacy programmes in Library and Information education; however, the role of LIS educators in promoting entrepreneurship and employability through LIS programme cannot be overemphasized. The paper established, therefore, that despite having information literacy programmes available in LIS education, unemployment is still eating deep in the global society. The reason is traced down to the need to step up the IL programme on both the part of the LIS educators and students. On the part of the government, the study suggested the provision of infrastructure for more practical-oriented entrepreneurial activities in the programme.*

Implication: *Educational, economic and social life of graduates is endangered in a society where the gap existing among individuals as it concerns entrepreneurial abilities and employability continues to be on the increase. Stepping up of IL programme in LIS education for entrepreneurship and employability will provide practical skills for students, thereby reducing the thin line that exists between entrepreneurship and unemployment.*

Originality/Value: *It was recommended that LIS programme be upgraded to incorporate more practical-based entrepreneurial activities for graduates' employability and more effective participation in the society*

Keywords: *Information Literacy (IL), Entrepreneurship, LIS Educators, Employability, LIS Students, Library and Information Science*

Paper type: *Conceptual review*

Introduction

Information is key to belonging to every society and its overload has left individuals with varied resources to have access to it due to advancement in technologies. Information literacy has been recognized to equip individuals especially learners and educators with skills of functioning effectively in the society. Onaade (2012) states that with the recent revolution in technologies, there has been expansion in the societies affecting all other sphere of human endeavor including the LIS profession. Again, this advancement has affected the labour market and so has also placed a key role on information professionals in many ways (Ugwu and Ezeani, 2012). Library and Information Science(LIS) profession is established to equip students with adequate information literacy skills which prepare them for career realization in the future. As the development of the modern-day society

demands that organizations develop different techniques of growing, so different institutions

are required to find ways of improving the skill development of the learners who would eventually be employed in the various labour organizations that abound. Students of Library and Information Science build their various skills of entrepreneurship in order to be gainfully employed when they graduate. Students may not be able to possess the skills that allow them to create new knowledge and use it effectively in the larger society if they are not exposed to practical skills of entrepreneurship which would foster self-confidence, zeal for management and critical thinking. As noted by Keeffe (2016) these skills will in effect offer students employability, prepare individuals to secure employment, advance within a working environment, complete workplace duties, and improves workplace performance. LIS students who are taught to acquire these skills through information literacy programme begin to build skills of lifelong learning; thus gain skill to enable them become gainfully employed and impart positively in the society.

Nigerian society has for sometime been noted to have a high rate of unemployment and the more students are graduated, the larger the number of individuals waiting to be employed and this in effect has implication for LIS profession to begin to find alternative ways of imparting skills of entrepreneurship to allow students get ready for graduation by building their career paths and overcoming the challenges of unemployment. The author further stated that the LIS students ought to be repositioned properly in all the tenets of the professions theory and in particular, channel their minds towards entrepreneurship through series of training available in the field. With information literacy programme, students are trained to believe in themselves, accept being prepared to take risks, create new knowledge, and become successful when they graduate. This way, unemployment would drastically be reduced and the society will in turn benefit from individuals who have undergone series of training in the LIS institutions.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to: examine the concept of information literacy, entrepreneurship and employability;

- ➢ explore the role of LIS educators in promoting employability through information literacy (IL);

- ➢ find out IL programmes that are available in LIS profession;

- ➢ examine challenges of entrepreneurship and employability in information literacy programme; and

- ➢ proffer strategies for stepping up IL programmes for entrepreneurship and employability.

Research Methodology

This paper includes the review of relevant literature on the concept of information literacy (IL), entrepreneurship and employability, the role of LIS educators in promoting employability through information literacy (IL) programme within the institution and the general public. Various databases were accessed on the University of Nigeria institutional repository and other electronic databases.

Searches were also done in journal databases including collections of Library and Information Science, governmental and non-governmental organizational websites, and the use of google search engine to sift relevant information resources from other websites outside the University of Nigeria's domain.

Concept of Information Literacy

Information literacy enables an individual to know when information is needed and have the capability to find, evaluate and use the information efficiently. Information literacy forms a basic life time lesson. It is usable generally for any branch of knowledge, every learning environs and for all levels of learning. With information literacy, students can appreciate the resources which is used in imparting learning, and in effect be able to learn in their own way. In any education world, the benefits of information literacy competency as noted by the California State University (2000)

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includes making available an accepted method that can guide students to various sources of information; providing extra facilities and tools to strengthen university studies hence contributing to the nation's attempt to increase the quality of education; and growing the lifelong learning process. An information literate person is one who knows when he needs information and he is aware that information is necessary in decision making; in other words, he plans for, accesses and critically evaluates the information needed.

An information literate person is aware of where to sift information and goes ahead to find and locate them from varied sources including computer and other technologies as well as analyze the information in order to offer new knowledge to the existing one and then contribute effectively to the society. Boekhorst (cited in Okiki 2011) summarized the concepts of information literacy under three thoughts: the ICT concept referring to the competence for accessing and sending information across to the intended audience; the information (re)sources concept, denoting the competence to locating and utilizing information with or without the use of aided technologies, as well as the information process concept, which connotes the process of identifying the needed information, accessing and using it, making right judgment in order to create and impact knowledge in the society which is the end user. These concepts therefore include both the ICT and use of information sources.

Information literacy goes hand in hand with technology literacy especially at this age of information technology. The reason is that the world is a global community and demands the use of different approaches to sift information within and beyond the local environment. This poses a challenge for students, Library and Information Science students inclusive, to begin to acquire the necessary information literacy skills to enable them to be creative and critical thinkers when it comes to the use of information. LIS students need to become information literate and be equipped with information and abilities to develop new perceptive and competencies to face the challenges of world market. This way, they

develop entrepreneurial skills which will help them in becoming gainfully employed.

Information Literacy Skills for LIS Students' Employability

The ability to search, evaluate and use information effectively has always been the drive for and demand of the information era. The need for LIS students to gather these abilities to fit into the job market especially with acquired entrepreneurial skills cannot be over emphasized. Even though there has been a constant cry through the years to begin to use information literacy programmes to develop skills for entrepreneurship for employability, the process is becoming more complex due to the enhancement of the 21st century era. This is evident in the rapidly changing information technology and ways of using them for entrepreneurial skills development. LIS students are required to get attuned to the complexity involved in accessing and using information for better functioning in the society.

The acquisition of information literacy skills is imperative to the students' ability to search and use information effectively (Ilogho and Nkiko, 2014). This is because they involve a set of competencies achieved when people can recognize that information is needed and have the ability to locate and evaluate the information effectively (Averill and Lewis 2013). In order to gain employability, LIS students must acquire these skills of entrepreneurship through information literacy to become successful when they graduate from the university. The contemporary age of technological know-how brings about change in information resources leaving educators and students with no option than making a paradigm shift in their approach to teaching and learning information literacy programme. More so, for students to be successful in their career learning, they must learn to use information creatively and critically in order to make judgment in their career path and then become gainfully employed.

Entrepreneurship and Employability

Entrepreneurship is one major vehicle for participating effectively in the society due to its ability to afford individuals opportunities to

become gainfully employed and begin to create knowledge by themselves. Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of creating new ideas and applying the endeavor and time thereby defying any form of risks in order to attain personal satisfaction and independence (Agu, 2010). When students are made to create new and diversified knowledge through various information literacy programmes, their paths become successful while they participate effectively in the society especially when they graduate. Thus, Anyanwu, Oduagwu, Ossai-Onah and Amaechi (2013) states that entrepreneurship equips individuals with information and abilities to initiate a project as well as developing perceptive and competence for quest for behaviour, skills and attributes for employability. McMillan (2006) thus views an entrepreneur as individual who through creativeness, innovation, prudence and discovery recognizes opportunities around them. Furthermore, he brought out two distinct aspects of an entrepreneur:
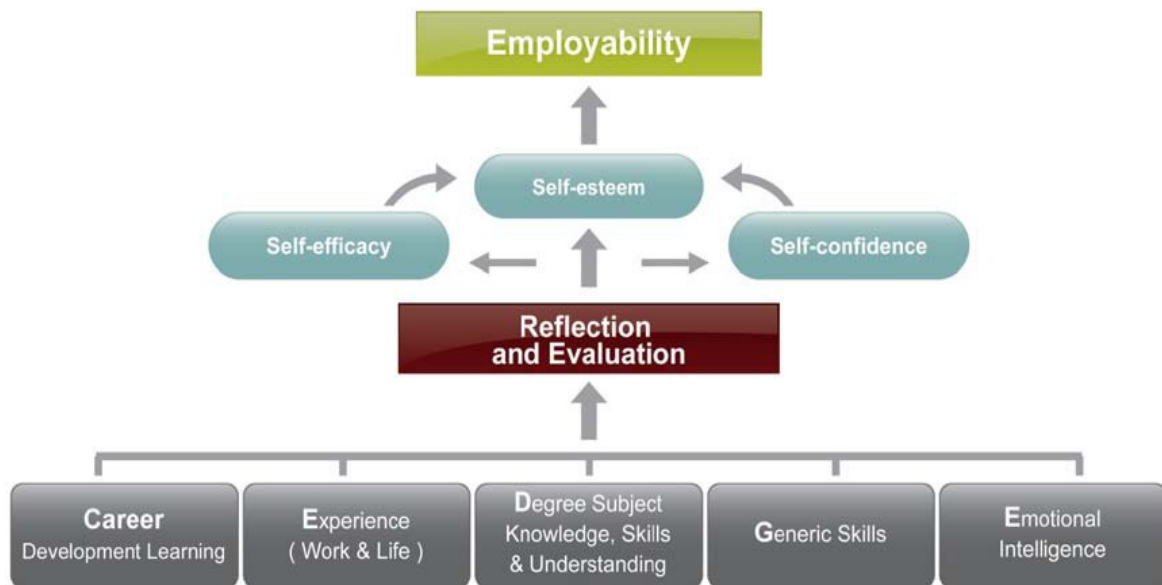
- Someone, who through creativity, innovation, foresight and discovery identify commercial opportunities around him or her;

- Someone practical who sees and exploits opportunities for making money successfully.

Undergraduate students that are trained to be entrepreneurs gain competencies which are required for individuals to live and function actively in developing the society.

Students that are entrepreneurs acquire positive leadership and are equipped with the skills for contributing more effectively in the society since the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) states that one of the three professional knowledge is the ability of the educator to understand how students learn as well as how to teach them effectively with

varieties of resources and techniques to foster various skills, entrepreneurship inclusive. LIS educators should step up to this challenge of building in students the spirit of innovation and self-efficacy, productivity or that of generating new products and services (Ugwu, 2012). Henry as cited in Elmuti et. al., 2012) states that the skills of entrepreneurship fall into three distinct categories of technical skills, business management skills, and personal entrepreneurial skills in which the major end product includes skills in written and oral communication, technical management, organizing, planning, decision making, marketing, accounting, innovation, risk taking, and persistence. It is only with these skills of entrepreneurship abilities that students that graduate from LIS education would begin to gain competencies in managing their career for better employability.

The aim of using information literacy programme in Library and Information institutions to develop students' entrepreneurship is to offer students the opportunity to acquire skills, ideas, knowledge and attitude and thereby gain independence, courage and leadership for employability. Pool and Sewell (2007) see employability as possessing a 'set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes' that allows an individual to choose a career for their fulfillment and satisfaction. Hence, for graduates of LIS to be gainfully employed, manage their career and derive accomplishment in their work, they need to be trained with information literacy programme which would equip them with lifelong learning skills for better and active participation and attainment in the society. Pool and Sewell further developed a model that best explains employability in their Career Edge Model shown below:

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Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007)

While self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem are keys to gaining employability whether paid or self, the skills such as career; experience; degree subject, knowledge, skills and understanding; generic skills and emotional intelligence are the kick off point through which the students gather self-actualization and in turn are ushered into employability.

However, stepping up of information literacy programme should be a task before the LIS educators considering the setbacks that entrepreneurship has suffered in Nigeria due to dearth in the ability to inculcate the passion for career development in individual citizens especially from younger age. Nnadozie, Akawa and Nnadozie (2013) citing one of the World Bank Report state that only one in every ten (10) Nigerians gets a job on graduation and that according to World Bank Research, 80% of Nigeria graduates do not have the required entrepreneurial skills to take up jobs. This problem bring into play, the role of LIS educators in promoting employability through IL programmes and only when teaching, learning and research are geared towards career development that this menace is curbed.

The Role of LIS Educators in Promoting Employability through Information Literacy Programme

Recently, information literacy is not just seen as knowing how to go about information or learning how to learn, but is also measured as a practical ability to be self-dependent and in turn, become entrepreneurs during and after the university education. There is no doubt that LIS education is channeled towards building future librarians and researchers whose impact would be felt in the society. The LIS educators in this scenario stay at the background as activators and resource organizers; guiding the sources of information (Heinonen, 2002). The information literacy programmes aid to support, promote and enhance teaching, learning and research with versatile challenges for students to be creative and innovative and also self-reliant skills for flexible, independent and lifelong learning and LIS educators are expected to attain these objectives.

Training is given to students on how to find, retrieve and manage information through various systems and in a variety of formats. Library and Information Science (LIS) educators should therefore strive to find alternative methods of making information literacy education practical for students to be able to gather required skills in order to gain employment, contribute effectively in the society and succeed after school. Part of the reasons for promoting information literacy programme for entrepreneurship and employability as stated by Anyanwu, et al (2013) are: to provide Library and Information Science graduates the additional skills that will empower them to transform their ideas into

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visible business; empower them to create jobs for themselves; build the zeal into the students striving toward owning a business and attempting to make it happen, and in turn, becoming successful in life. More so, IL programme educators in the LIS field should take into cognizance further steps to make users aware about different changes prevailing due to technological advancement and only when this happens that students would graduate, ready to get gainfully employed and become successful in the society.

Using Information Literacy Programmes in Fostering Entrepreneurship

Information Literacy (IL) programmes create awareness of resources that are available and how to make optimal use of them in order to build entrepreneurial skills for employability. This applies to LIS educators, students, librarians and library users especially in teaching and learning, research and consultancy. Accordingly, IL programmes is designed to impart different level of skills to different level of users. Meanwhile, the IL programmes for different categories of users include: E-Resource Orientation Programs; Online Searching Techniques; Open Access Resource Orientation Programs; Hands on Trainings; Workshop on E-Resources and Bibliographical Citations; Instructions for Bibliographic Citations; Exposure to Copyright and Plagiarism Issue; Citation Analysis and Online Information Literacy Tutorial.

Many employment opportunities available by virtue of information literacy programmes which equip the students of LIS with skills of self-dependence, self-efficacy and self-actualization in Nigeria abound. As stated by Anyanwu, et al (2013), there are many self-employment options available to Library and Information Science students as entrepreneurs by virtue of being properly exposed to ILPs which include:
- ❖ Publishing
- ❖ Development of Computer Software
- ❖ Production and Sale of Library Equipment's
- ❖ Information Brokerage and Consultancy Services

- ❖ Bookselling Business
- ❖ Operation of Business Centres and Cyber Café Business
- ❖ Computer Maintenance

This presents a practical opportunity for Library and Information Science students to delve into preparation of the graduation especially in carrying out specific tasks in libraries and information centres and beyond. Getting deeply involved in the production of software packages, audio visual equipment, catalogue cards, metal shelf, and bookstands as the authors stated prepares them for information brokerage and consultancy services to enable them re-package information for clients for a fee. On the other hand, Ekuoye (2007) and Igbeka (2008) listed some business opportunities resulting from information literacy programmes in the university education below:
- ❖ Information Brokerage
- ❖ Book Publishing and Trading
- ❖ Email Publishing, Web Publishing and Desktop Publishing
- ❖ Establishing and Maintaining Libraries for Organisations
- ❖ Organization of a Private Library
- ❖ Compilation of Directories
- ❖ Compilation of Bibliographies
- ❖ Information Services to the Visually Impaired
- ❖ Indexing and Abstracting Services
- ❖ Freelancing and others

In trying to identify these opportunities, the authors state that when students are prepared towards these, it does not only prepare them for paid employment but also foster in them the spirit of independence, courage, risk taking and lifelong opportunities that would enable them to function more actively in the society. Hence, Isimoya (2012) states that an entrepreneur emerges when an individual notices profitable business opportunity unexploited and exploits it thereby changing an opportunity for a different business or different service.

Challenges of Information Literacy Programme in Entrepreneurship and Self Employment

Training and educating LIS students for skills development and acquisition has become

essential criteria and therefore has implication for boosting growth and competitiveness among them and then preparing them for employability in the society when they graduate. However, graduates for quite some time now generally experience problem of unemployment which most times is attributed to lack of skills development. The reason can be associated with inability on the part of the graduates to exhibit skill-based and entrepreneurial knowledge of their course and on the part of the educators, inability to step up information literacy programmes. This has posed great challenge on the students to begin to acquire skills of entrepreneurship for employment with programmes of IL that makes for more practical and active learning and development of entrepreneurship. Information literacy programme is often faced with various challenges which tends to hinder effective entrepreneurial skills, knowledge delivery and acquisition. As noted by Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) some of these challenges are lack of entrepreneurial spirit; fear of competition and failure; lack of knowledge on how to interact with entities that make businesses succeed; lack of specific skills; problem of generating compelling business ideas; among others.

Most times, when students lack the acumen to start creating new knowledge and managing them to become independent, they tend to be inclined to frustration and thus, lack the zeal to establish themselves and become gainfully employed when they leave school. The inability of the LIS students to develop alongside the rapid technological advancement affects both students' career path and employability. It is only when the programme of information literacy programmes is stepped up that students and graduates would be able to develop confidence, courage, self-reliance, self-efficacy, and then be ready to face the challenges of the ever changing society.

Further, Anyanwu, et al (2013) brought out some challenges affecting the teaching and learning of information literacy programme among which are:
- ❖ Carefree attitude of student
- ❖ Lack of functional workshop and laboratories
- ❖ Lack of ICT skills
- ❖ Unavailability of lecturers that are entrepreneurial conscious:
- ❖ Unavailability of fund.

When students fail to develop their entrepreneurial skills as a result of their non challant attitude towards learning practical paths of their career, they become inactive both with themselves and to the organization where they find themselves when they finish school. Lack of functional laboratories for practical activities/ training in bindery, indexing, abstracting, cataloguing, publishing and reprography, ICT, social media and networking may affect students entrepreneurial performance; hence, may hinder their higher entrepreneurship like establishing and managing a library. Sometimes, lack of LIS educators who are not aware and enthusiastic about entrepreneurship affects students' ability to build their career potentials and this leaves the graduates inefficient in other words, deprives them of the ability to function very effectively in the job market.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Having identified the problems affecting the use of information literacy to foster entrepreneurship for employability, it would be worthwhile to suggest that training and workshops be conducted to inculcate in students, graduates, librarians and LIS educators the need to develop interest in entrepreneurship; and thus, reduce anxiety about failure and the competiveness of the world market, to build awareness into the trainees on how to become confident in order to face challenges and so, be successful even after leaving school. Again, students' IL training should be geared towards practical skill acquisition to encouraging self-employment through the provision of functional workshop, laboratories and ICT facilities for more active learning of IL programmes and development of entrepreneurship for gainful employment.

For any LIS education to attain its goal of entrepreneurship with the use of IL programme especially in the ever changing era, the need to step up the programme to meet the competitiveness of the global market cannot be

overemphasized. LIS students who are expected to graduate in no time and join the labour force require skills that would help them compete favourably and become successful in the society. LIS educators should appreciate their role in fostering these entrepreneurial abilities and prepare themselves to attain this goal. Hence, IL programmes in the library and information profession may not achieve the aim if efforts are not channeled towards imparting entrepreneurship in learners who are expected to graduate and become employed gainfully. Though programmes are being laid down to ensure that students are equipped with various skills for employability, efforts need to be made to enhance the training techniques and only when this is realized that students would graduate from the university, ready to face the highly competitive market.

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