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Abstract

Nigerian library and information science (LIS) schools are professional institutions that train students in the various aspects of information profession. These include the creation, selection, organization, management, preservation, dissemination and utilization of collections of information resources in all formats. Nigerian LIS schools play a significant role in the production of high quality LIS professionals who occupy a unique position in national development. Adequate provision of resources especially in electronic format for students' use will translate into quality delivery of knowledge in the profession. Inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) skills, low basic information literacy levels, prohibitive cost to gain access to the internet, inadequate ICT infrastructure, inadequate affordable online access to the internet amongst others are the constraints faced by Nigerian LIS schools in the provision of electronic information resources, thereby hampering quality assurance in the profession. This reveals a need for great efforts by LIS schools in Nigeria to promote quality assurance through provisions of opportunities to meet the basic learning needs of LIS students for the emerging global society. This paper therefore discusses Nigerian LIS schools, electronic information resources, as well as their values in LIS schools in Nigeria for promoting quality assurance.

Introduction

Library and information science schools are established to educate, train and produce qualified manpower for employment in professional positions in libraries and as information service providers. Library schools, according to Anyawu, Oduagwu, Ossai-onah, and Amaechi (2013), are expected to impart the necessary library and information skills to their students so that, after graduation, they can function effectively in libraries and other information related work settings with minimal supervision. They play a significant role in the production of high quality LIS professionals who occupy a unique position in national development (Abioye, 2013).

LIS professionals are gatekeepers and brokers of information whose expertise is essential for knowledge acquisition required for decision-making and national development. Library and information science programme in library schools is designed to assist students in the development of a wide range of technical skills in both library and media services that can lead to or enhance

employment in the library field and other related industries. Library schools, therefore, have the responsibility of providing trained library and information science professionals.

Nigerian LIS schools and academic programmes

Library science or library and information science is considered to be an interdisciplinary field that applies the practices, perspectives, and tools of management, information technology, education, and other areas to libraries; the collection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources; and the political economy of information (Hossam, 2009). Library and information science as a discipline is designed to produce information professionals that will competently serve different stakeholders for development. The graduates of library and information science ought to be empowered through practical skills. The proliferation of library and information science programme in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is quite evident. The existing library schools have succeeded in producing various categories of personnel who are competently trained professionals in the field (Ndubuisi and Udo, 2013).

Nigerian library schools are designed to prepare their students for a variety of careers in the information industry, including indexing and abstracting, cataloguing and classification, information packaging and repackaging, information architecture; database design and implementation; web design and implementation; and networking support and information consulting; as well as for graduate study (Edegbo, 2011). The purpose is to produce graduates ready to face the ever-changing challenges of information provision in today's world and to prepare information leaders that can research into the problems of information provision with a view to finding solutions to such problems. LIS graduates are also prepared for many roles in business, research, government, and non-profit organizations.

Depending on the track of study completed, bachelor's degree graduates are also equipped with the academic background necessary for graduate study in many fields including computer science, business, education, information, statistics, law, medicine, public health, and natural and social sciences. Also, LIS schools in Nigeria prepare their graduates for non-traditional careers in the information industry fields, and to deal with regular professional operations such as cataloguing, classification, indexing, collection development, and the likes. It must be noted that all the aspects of professional training in LIS schools in Nigeria today are amenable to the use of electronic information resources (Edegbo, 2011).

Electronic information resources provision in Nigerian LIS schools

The emergence of electronic information resources has tremendously transformed information handling and management in tertiary institutions. The deployment of electronic information resources has contributed to reshaping information retrieval process and access to information by students including LIS students for academic activities. LIS students are increasingly expected to use electronic information resources and must acquire the skills necessary to exploit them. Electronic information resources are indispensable tools that can facilitate the sourcing, retrieval and dissemination of information by students in LIS schools.

Electronic information resources refer to library's information bearing materials that are in electronic form and these include electronic books (e-books), electronic newspapers (e-newspapers), electronic journals (e-journals), as well as Internet resources (Olarongbe and Ibrahim, 2009). The resources are the electronic representation of information. They can be simply described as resources that include documents in electronic or e-format that can be accessed via Internet. They are available in various forms such as e-books, digital libraries, online journal, magazine, e-learning tutors, on line test e-journals, e-discussions, e-news, data archives and e-mail on line chatting and a collection of data, be it text, image collection, other multimedia products such as numerical, graphical mode.

Electronic information resources (EIRs) provision in library schools can enable many academics and students in Nigerian library schools to exploit the resources to access relevant, current and updated information for diverse purposes. The benefit of electronic information resources provision in library schools is that access to information can be done remotely by academic staff and students in various locations and platforms without physical visit to the library. Provision of electronic information resources could promote efficiency in dissemination of information for learning, seminar presentation, workshops, research purposes, among others in LIS schools in Nigeria. Electronic information resources are more easily updated than the print resources. Electronic information resource "is more of a tool to assist in conducting research, learning, exam preparation, seminar, and other related academic purposes in LIS schools (Thanuskodi, 2012).

EIRs provision can be viewed as an important component in library schools as it will play a pivotal role in meeting the information and communication needs of both the lecturers and the students in the profession. EIRs provision in Nigerian LIS schools will make it possible to access a wide range of information, such as up-to-date research reports, from anywhere in the world. It also enables LIS scholars and academic institutions in Nigeria to disseminate information to a wider audience around the globe through having web sites and a way to search them and organize the output.

Values of EIRs in learning process in Nigerian LIS schools

There is a widely held view that the development of information and communication technology (ICT) will lead to significant improvement in the availability and accessibility of information in different organizations/institutions, including library and information science schools in Nigeria. Application of EIRs including bibliographic references, online databases, theses/dissertations, abstracts and full text will relatively improve the quality of academic activities carried out in LIS schools. The implication is that all academics and students will generally take advantage of the wider access to information which the emerging EIRs can provide in tackling their academic activities.

EIRs provide more choices, enhance flexibility, and will often provide the students with instant feedback. They provide students the opportunity to select learning materials, and are convenient to access at any time and at any place. The rapid increase in the use of EIRs to include computers, the Internet, databases and the World Wide Web in all aspects of human activities including the most important education and information processing and retrieval will become a very promising and vital component of the enabling structure for LIS career development (Aramide and Bolarinwa, 2010). As a result, EIRs have become the lively substance to the modern library schools' reserves in satisfying varied needs of students, lecturers, and researchers with minimum risk and time. EIRs have many advantages in the learning process, and these include: available any time of the day; provide hyperlinks; huge information reservoirs; quick information; various search options; easy citations; ease in uploading and updating; ease in storage and dissemination; flexibility; time, space and cost are not major hurdles; ease of archiving. EIRs are commercially produced to deliver a collection of data, including text, image collections, and other multimedia products (Egberongbe, 2011).

EIRs hold many values in learning processes in Nigerian library schools. Values of EIRs in Nigerian library schools will include serving as storage media because digitized data permit compact storage of large volume of information. Also, allowing data manipulation in ways that are not cost effective in other formats. Beyond serving as storage media, EIRs allow free access and searching. Downloading of information from EIRs to a student's computer and being able to cut and paste, move, add, and delete as much as desired is possible. Other values of EIRs are convenience, timeliness, the ability to search text easily, and animation of graphics (Adesoye and Amusa, 2009).

EIRs also provide access to current information, as these are often updated frequently. In addition, EIRs are convenient to use since students are able to access information from the library, departmental library, Internet café, or at times from the comfort of their homes at any time of the day.

It is for some of these reasons that library schools in Nigeria are being challenged to provide access to EIRs to support teaching, research and learning. Use of EIRs by LIS scholars, academics and research scholars, therefore, is an important area of study in today's information environment.

The environment has made it important for LIS education and training to strive to improve their quality of programmes to be able to participate in educational networks and develop innovative strategies in planning and administration of LIS education. EIRs are significant in the achievement of LIS educational goals/objectives and the fulfilment of the primary tasks of LIS schools. Hence, with this conclusion came the realisation that there is need for greater infusion of EIRs knowledge and skills into LIS course content, as well as thorough diffusion of EIRs competencies into the LIS students.

Advances in information communication technologies (ICT) and the concept of global village have made retrieval and use of electronic information resources easy for students. This is due to the fact that most of the documents to be consulted for educational outcomes are available in electronic resources such as the Internet, CD-ROM, OPACs, electronic journals and electronic books (Ekenna and Mabawonku, 2013). LIS students can retrieve vast amount of information for their literature from electronic information resources. EIRs are very useful for research students in the field of LIS due to the vast amount of data it contains. The huge amount of information at their disposal enables students to have an in-depth view of the research topic. Research and other academic activities require originality, and this leads LIS students of all categories to retrieve information for their work from remote computers around the world through EIRs use.

Constraints to the use of EIRs in library schools

Electronic information resources promote efficiency in dissemination of information for academic purposes in the academic institutions, library schools inclusive. The importance and the wide ranging scope of electronic information resources for communication, information retrieval and instructional delivery to support teaching, learning, and research activities in Nigerian LIS schools are acknowledged across the country. However, despite the fact that electronic information resources have a lot of benefits, there are some challenges to its effective use in Nigerian library schools. One common problem faced by students is that of slow internet access. The slow speed results into wastage of time required to retrieve relevant information. Others include lack of constant electricity supply and access to electronic resources.

Researches into the use of electronic information resources have examined constraints associated with the use of electronic information resources in Nigerian library schools (Oduwale and Sowole, 2006). These include inadequate ICT skills among the students, low basic information literacy levels also among the students, prohibitive cost to gain access to the internet in the library, inadequate ICT infrastructure and affordable online access. Other challenges faced by LIS students in the utilisation of the EIRs include lack of awareness, lack of information literacy skills necessary to search databases, lack of time, the challenge of locating "good citable stuff", inability to use effectively the available EIRs, and poor skills in information searching due to which LIS students at undergraduate and postgraduate level rarely access and make use of EIRs (Baro, Endouware and Ubogu 2011).

Most library schools' students in Nigeria will not have access to EIRs for various reasons, including a lack of the necessary infrastructure, such as telephone lines, electricity, software and hardware, and a lack of trained staff for maintenance and training in the use of computers. Frequency of EIRs use by LIS students in Nigeria is also low despite its wide range availability. Further constraints noted are inadequate time, poor awareness, poor subject coverage, and slow downloading. Igbo and Imo (2010) identified lack of adequate electronic information resources and irregularity in subscription to electronic journals as some of the factors inhibiting the use of electronic information resources by LIS students in Nigerian library schools. They concluded that lack of funds, lack of professional staff, irrelevant materials, colonial mode of librarianship, lack of appropriate training

opportunities, lack of needs analysis, ICT challenges, inappropriate buildings and lack of co-operation and a national information policy are the inhibiting factors toward adequate utilisation of electronic information resources in library and information science schools in Nigeria, thus affecting quality assurance in services delivery.

Promoting quality assurance through provision of EIRs in Nigerian library schools

Quality assurance is one main concern among higher level administrators and educators to enhance the quality of education, mutual recognition of qualification worldwide (Sacchanand, 2015). Quality assurance is defined as systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by a higher education institution or system to monitor performance and to ensure achievement of quality outputs or improved quality; the means through which an institution confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by the institution or other awarding body. Quality assurance again refers to systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement. According to Wikipedia, cited in Ape and Uganneya (2015), it was established that quality assurance is a planned and systematic activities implemented in a quality system so that quality requirements for a product or service is fulfilled.

Great efforts have been made to promote quality assurance in higher education at both national and regional levels. Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced (Materu, 2007). A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff as they are the heart of the institution that produce its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation.

Quality assurance has always been considered a strategic issue by LIS schools for improvement of the teaching and learning experience and for accountability (Tammaro, 2005). Internationalization has added a new role to quality assurance in LIS. Library and information science education in Nigeria has come a long way. The provision of resources to include EIRs to meet the basic learning, research and other academic needs of information professionals is a first step towards preparing library and information science schools in Nigeria for the emerging global society. The relevance and viability of library and information science education in Nigeria requires looking at both the access to and the quality in new ways to enhancing the quality of products turned out from the universities into the labour market. The survival of library and information science education in Nigeria depends largely on the quality of academics and students in all categories (Edegbó, 2011).

The provision of EIRs could be important for LIS education and training to strive to improve their quality of programmes, on the one hand, to be able to participate in educational networks and develop innovative strategies in planning and administration of LIS education while on the other hand, to produce graduates where workplace spans the whole world. Quality assurance apparently plays a vital role in the field of education as well as library and information science education at institutional, national, regional and international levels. LIS institutions could be convinced that quality assurance could improve the quality and acceptability of their degrees. There is an awareness and willingness among LIS institutions to participate in quality assurance. This is due to the growing explosion in number of higher education programmes and providers as well as increasing competition and commercialization as driving forces that create challenges and urgent need towards quality assurance to ensure that LIS programmes maintain the quality and the academic standards, credibility, prestige, image, visibility and accountability to stakeholders.

Ensuring quality assurance through provision of EIRs in the LIS programmes are in response to continuous changes and transformation of library and information science education. These will maintain quality and global standards of LIS education in Nigerian LIS schools, enhance the mobility of LIS students, and develop quality and standards of the LIS programmes and schools in the country.

Problems of quality assurance in Nigeria LIS schools

Quality assurance is fundamental to the sustenance of Nigerian educational system. Among all the changes occurring in LIS education, the ones that are most visible and observable can be found in the LIS curricula. That is, the curriculum for LIS education usually mirrors what is being offered to train librarians and information professionals and inculcate in them knowledge and skills to become qualified personnel in the field, and also meet the challenges the ever-changing information society brings (Mbon, Etor and Osim, 2012).

New trends and development worldwide emerge posing great challenge for library and information science schools in Nigeria in promoting quality assurance. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, outdated /changing curricula, poor human and financial resources, lack of access to necessary information resources for learning and poor communication among key player in the library schools are some of the major issues library schools in Nigeria are contending with (Igwe, 2006). These problems necessitated the interest in investigating whether Nigerian LIS schools do suffer from quality assurance. Observations have indicated that the absence of facilities and conditions of service appear to be the major contributory factors that are militating against the enhancement of students' effectiveness on their academic activities and quality of education in LIS schools in Nigeria. Some LIS programmes in Nigerian library schools relatively do not address the current job market requirements due to inadequate teaching resources at LIS training; lack of adequate ICT content in the courses; inadequate length of courses; courses that are outrightly irrelevant to the job market; and inadequate industrial attachment for LIS students.

Krolak (2005) concluded that technical capacity is also one of the most pressing constraints in ensuring quality assurance in library and information science schools. This manifests itself in three ways: insufficient number of adequately trained and credible professional staff to manage quality assurance processes with integrity and consistency across institutions/programmes and over time; inadequate numbers of lecturers with knowledge and experience in conducting self-evaluations and peer review using EIRs, and strain on the lecturers as they have to support both their own internal quality systems and external quality assurance processes of their national agent.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The provision of electronic information resources in Nigerian Library Schools by the management has the potential of enhancing learning by the students. These resources should not only be available but accessible before all the benefits associated with their use can be derived. In promoting quality assurance across Nigerian LIS schools, investment in adequate and qualified human resource, infrastructure and activities in the training of LIS graduates must be ensured. Stakeholders should collaborate and network in order to come up with lasting solutions for LIS schools, and stakeholders in the field of librarianship should hold forums to share experiences and benchmark. LIS schools in Nigeria in promoting quality assurance should collaborate and partner in a country, internationally and regionally in teaching, research, student/staff exchanges, conferences, workshops, curriculum development, publication, research, supervision and examination which should be done with the use of EIRs.

Upgrading of workshops and laboratories in library schools becomes imperative if the objectives of EIRs utilization in promoting quality assurance is to be achieved and sustained. The laboratories and the workshops in library schools in Nigeria should be upgraded by installing modern ICT facilities in them, as well as ensuring that the necessary equipment needed for academic activities is put in place. Finally, the various bodies and the stakeholders in the educational system such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board of Technical Education (NBTE), as well as

the parent institutions should ensure that adequate funds are released to the library schools because it is the availability of fund that will determine the acquisition of relevant EIRs.

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Introduction

Literature Review

The 21st century presented a changing scenario of library and information science education and forms of information available. Researching library and information science education and educating librarians with solid intellectual framework and skills have become an imperative agenda. Changes are occurring in staffing for library staff globally. Competence and suitable factors in library schools are crucial to meeting the changing needs of library and information science students who will ultimately find themselves in the job market which requires new and additional competencies to function in the dynamic and complex digital environment. This no longer has another dimension to library practice and has become a matter of high priority.

Library and information science educators face exceptional challenges in the best situation of networked information explosion, rapid access and fast growth. They need to teach information literacy. According to IFLA (Manishi, 2007), technology would provide new ways on how teaching and research are conducted and the way students learn hence library and information science education is not left out of this transition, transformation and globalization of higher education.

For this reason, it is a matter of necessity for library and information science education to introduce quality assurance in library schools. Quality assurance must set in motion as a means of ensuring that the best practices are adopted for library schools. These quality assurance will comprise administrative and routine activities implemented in a system so that requirements and goals for high standards will be fulfilled. Quality assurance being a subject of both internal and external demand, will involve systematic evaluation, comparison with standards, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback. It is a routine task that has to be done continually and not as a makeshift activity.

Competent staff are crucial to service excellence in any organization, and library schools are no exception. Qualified and competent staff in the right proportion will definitely create positive