

## **Library and Information Science Training for Professional Recognition and Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Every democratic government has educational agenda and developmental focus. To align with the government agenda, every institution should key in to the agenda. In Nigeria, emphasis has been on poverty alleviation and development. This paper looked at how the training of Library and Information Scientists could contribute to the development of Nigeria. For development to happen, individuals and professions have to be developed. Thus, this paper pointed out ways individuals in the profession and the profession itself could be developed to impact on the national developmental agenda.*

**Key Words:** Personal development, Professional development, National development, Professional recognition, LIS and National development

### **Introduction**

Any profession that does not impact in the development of a country is not worthy to exist. Any profession that does not impart the skill needed to impact the society where it exists is supposed to be restructured. Visibility of any profession is tantamount to its activities in the society. Where there is no sign of existence of a profession, the profession may not be recognized in the society. Recognition of any profession depends on what the profession is doing to impact the community where it operates. Therefore, the question is, what are Library and Information Scientists doing to show their existence? How has the government felt the existence of this profession? What has the profession done, to be reckoned with, to show the presence of the organization in Nigeria? How has the government felt the existence of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in the country state? If nothing has been done to be felt by the government, what then should be done?

### **Objectives**

The main aim of this paper is to show that professional impact of any organization is one of the determinants of its visibility in the society. The specific objectives are to:

1. Impress upon the minds of library and information scientists (LIS) the need for personal, professional, and national development.
2. Make library and information scientists visualize the importance of personal professional training in their personal life and in their work performance.
3. Highlight what library and information science professionals have to do to be recognized in the society where they belong.
4. Itemize what library and information science professionals could do to assist in the development of the nation.

### **Significance of This Presentation**

The relevance of any profession in a society depends on its contribution and influence in the society. The relevance of the contribution depends on the need of the society at that particular period. This paper intends to equip LIS with the prerequisite knowledge of what would make them relevant in the society so that they work towards relevance. Things that should be done by the profession are being done by other professions.

This profession is being hijacked, or is almost hijacked, by other related or even, non-related professions while the owners of the kitchen stay in the parlor. This paper exposes LIS to their professional laxity and calls them to take up their mantle and hold the bull by its horns.

LIS in this paper stands for both library and information science and library and information scientists (it could be used as both singular and plural).

### ***Method of Information Gathering***

This paper is based on practical professional observation and on literature review of trends in the profession. It is full of our opinions on what should be done in the profession to remain active and viable. This is thus an opinion paper.

### ***Types of Training for Development***

There are different aspects of development. There are personal development, professional development, and national development. Personal development has to do with personal training acquired to improve oneself which, eventually, enhances his professional performance. Professional development has to do with the skills needed to perform optimally in ones professional choice. Every involvement engaged on, to upgrade and improve one's engagement in his/her duty, is development. National development entails visible impact of the country towards the happiness of its inhabitants. It is a continuous improvement in the provision of infrastructure and reduction of poverty in the nation.

Different professions have different ways of looking at development. Geographers see development as standard of living and quality of life of a people. It has to do with the improvement of life compared to others around or countries around (en-wikipedia.org, 2012). Local governments or councils, states, and nations see development from a different perspective akin to national development. There are seven recognizable types of development summed in two divisions as (1) developments requiring consent and (2) development not requiring consent (Lake Macquarie City Council, 2012). In Sociology, Health Science, or Child Psychology, development is seen as a progressive change of living things, for example, humans from infancy to adulthood. Each of the identified stages has its own peculiar developments akin to it (O' Hanlon, 2012). In Human Resources and in Management, seven types of development are identified as they affect employees. They are (1) In-house technical training (2) Quality training to improve on customer services. This is where Total Quality Management comes in, to improve processes and products in manufacturing sectors (3) Skills training on how to present yourself, use of language, and how to negotiate (4) Professional training in various departments. If there are no experts to give this type of training, send your employee for short courses (5) Functional training.

This could be an in-house training (training on the job) or further education for a diploma (6) Team bonding activity. This is an outdoor activity to enhance oneness and teamwork. Money is spent on this with a major aim of training leaders for teamwork, and (7) Managerial training: This type of training encourages managers to attend expensive seminars to learn best practices in the profession (Hoe, 2009). Numbers 8 – 10 are trainings that should be added for employees' loyalty to the company or institution or organization. They are never regarded in Human Resources profession or in Management courses. Few faith-based institutions see it as necessary ingredients in work enhancement and faithfulness. They are (8) Family life development: Employers of labour should be concerned with the well being of their employee's family.

The welfare of all employers' employees is the welfare of the employing organization. Let your employee's family development and progress be your concern (9) Health development seminars and practices should be encouraged. Let there be health schemes for the employees and even their families. The health of the workers is the wealth of the employing institution. Health tips and medical check-ups should be given to workers on regular basis (10) Faith-based development. Every religion has its beliefs. No religion teaches stealing or embezzlement as a doctrine. The problem is that employers of labour detach religion from work ethics. This is not advocating same faith in employment but that employees should know the beliefs of the employing body and be ready to comply. For instance, at Babcock University, their institutional philosophy reads "Babcock University philosophy is anchored on the harmonious development of the intellectual, physical, social and spiritual potentials of students; and inculcating in men and women a nobility of character and stability of purpose needed in our society" (Babcock University, 2010).

Babcock University mission statement says “Building people for leadership through quality Christian education, transforming lives, impacting society for positive change through the pervading influence of our graduates in service to humanity”, the school went on to list three ways to achieve the mission as (1) Achieving excellence in our teaching, research programme and service delivery (2) Imparting quality Christian education, and (3) Instilling Christ-like character to the members of our community” (Babcock University, Undergraduate Bulletin, 2009). Faith adherence is important for faithfulness in work employment. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of gains. Now we will talk about personal, professional, and national training as they apply to librarianship and affect the development of our resident area.

### ***Personal Librarianship Training and Development Impact in the Society***

Education, formal or informal, is the beginning of personal training in any occupation. Acquisition of necessary skills to excel in one’s profession of choice starts from acquiring the necessary training in form of education or apprenticeship. Relevant requisite qualification is the beginning of professional development. Are there some LISs who are where they are because they are appointed to be there by their God fathers in authority when they do not possess the requisite qualifications? When square pegs are put in square holes there is bound to be fruitless friction to fit in.

Academic qualification or apprenticeship is good but it is not enough. Relevant education should include the capacity to embrace new technologies in the field. If a LIS professional does not know how to apply Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the place of work, something is wrong in the person’s personal development. There is no profession in this era that does not apply ICT in the discharge of their duties. In fact, when ICT is mentioned, two professions that come in mind are Computer Science and Information Science. Mass Communication is regarded as the consumer of the outcome or the product generated by Information Scientists. They utilize ICT as a means to convey their message while ICT is one of the tools used by Information Scientists in their duty. How have we embraced social networks? Onuoha and Atulomah (2011) conducted a research that showed that some librarians still lack the knowledge of online social networks. To have real personal development, LIS should embrace change. Change is a sign of progress and development. Change is inevitable because the world is not stagnant and there is continuous acquisition of new knowledge. In some organizations, it is very hard for the managers to allow their employees to go for personal development even though it enhances professional output. Sometimes it is because of the monetary involvement. In such a case, the employer needs to spend his personal money to improve himself, otherwise someone more qualified may oust you out.

### ***Professional Development***

Skills of 18<sup>th</sup> century are no more relevant in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. At a time in librarianship it was the card catalogue but today, it is the Online Public Access Catalogue. At a time in the past, it was the Computer Output Microform (COMcat) but today it is the Online Catalogue. Change is really inevitable for one to be relevant in his career. LISs should strive to make themselves indispensable. Try to be the expert you need to be in your profession. It is time for LIS to specialize in different aspects of the profession. In cataloguing, subject cataloguers should be employed. System’s administrators with computer literacy or degree, plus a specialty in LIS should be employed. There should be a systematic and continuous revision of LIS curriculum in LIS schools and universities to accommodate new trends in development.

The LIS profession should not be a dumping ground where drop outs find solace. It is true that LIS courses are not taught in secondary schools, so are many other courses that students do in universities. LIS should make deliberate efforts to advertise LIS courses in secondary schools so that prospective candidates will choose it from the onset, than canvassing for students to change to come to LIS, or LIS departments admitting leftovers or rejects from other departments. LIS profession should not be a dumping ground for rejects. The profession should be made attractive, to be envied by others. Innovation is the solution to this regrettable condition.

Library and Information Science Association should be respected. How you lay your bed is how you lie on it. LIS should act like other enviable associations in Nigeria like Nigerian Institute of Bankers, ACCA, ICAN, NBA, etc. In all these professions, you cannot practice without membership certificate. How is it in Library and Information Science profession? Hopefully, if Nigerian Librarians Council would take the assignment serious, there is a foreseen change. If membership of Chattered Librarians of Nigeria is made compulsory for LIS practice in Nigeria, it will be the beginning of professional recognition of the body in Nigeria.

Our leaders should borrow leaf from them. The starting point is understudying those that have made it. Secondly, have implementable rules and regulations to guide the association. If LIS association is recognized by our presence being felt when we need to, then the association will be enviable and potential undergraduates will hear about it and decide to do the course to become professionals in the field. There will be no need for us to canvas for students, we may rather reject some.

### ***LIS and National Development***

An association's influence in a society will only be felt if the association is known, seen, and heard. Knowing an organization means that the organization is well publicized. Do people talk about LIS in any government gathering? Is the association advertising its meetings in the media? Has the association a website? Are minutes of their meetings or resolutions of the association in the net? Does the association float any journal or newsletter? Does the association have an office with paid staff? Does the association have a regulatory body to ensure adherence to standard rules and regulations? In the association registered with the government of the country? Is the association recognized worldwide? These are some measures to be taken to be known in a society. Which of these does the association do? Be visible and noticeable!

Be part of national development by advising the government on issues that relate to your profession. Nigeria passed the Freedom of Information bill last year (Oloja, Jimoh, and Daka, 2011; Nwankwo and Chiedozie, 2011), what contribution to the debate for the bill did LIS make? It is better to be known for a wrong course than not to be known at all.

There are national events that happen in every country. One that is obvious in all countries of the world is the Independence Day. In Nigeria, there are six nationally celebrated holidays that are not religious. These are May Day (May 1); Mothers, Day (May 13); Children's Day (May 27); Democracy Day (May 29); Father's Day (June 17); and Independence Day. The association should show her presence in at least three of these nationally celebrated holidays. How has LIS association been fairing in this? How will the Association be seen when it is not participating in national events? Doing the right thing that you have not been doing before is part of development.

In education, where our profession squarely lies, what advice has LIS been giving to the government concerning libraries in primary and secondary schools? All secondary schools in Nigeria should have libraries; has LIS shown keen interest in pursuance of this worthy course? Who should be the vanguard of this if not LIS. LIS should be out to advice the government on issues pertaining to libraries in the country. Government should hear LIS talk about the importance of libraries in the education system of the country. Continue to talk until you are heard. Politics is in everything in Nigeria, and unfortunately so, so LIS should lobby to be heard and to be seen. To be part of development, you have to be known, seen and heard.

Literacy of any country is based on the citizens' reading culture. Acquisition of knowledge is a product of reading. Though there are tacit and explicit knowledge, but wholesome knowledge comes from reading. There is no formal learning without reading and writing. Literacy is a product of reading, writing and the ability to express oneself intelligently. Reading has to do with materials, especially books which are provided for citizens with tax payers' money (for public libraries).

### ***Training for Professional Recognition***

The traditional training in librarianship kept librarians indoors, buried in the libraries, without contact with the outside. Seeing the profession as "book guidance and protection" made the employees a set of secluded individuals who are always providing "books" to readers. There should be a way of bringing librarians out of the cage once a while to interact with the outside world. Being seen in the "outside world" does not necessarily mean going out of the work place, even though it includes it; one could be seen serving clients through the Internet, Social network, Blackberry, I-pod, Mobile phone (Text messages), and other media. When quality services are rendered and timely too, the profession is beckoning recognition.

LIS should make themselves relevant in the society. There are many services the profession is rendering, and could render, that are not known in the society. The government does not even know the extent to which LIS could work. Let us tell the government what the profession could do for them. LIS curriculum is so rich that anybody who is in this profession can do varieties of unknown functions in different organizations. In some institutions, for example in University of Ibadan, the department is called the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies.

Four degrees are offered in Master Degree level namely, Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS), Master of Archives and Records Management (MARM), Master of Health and Information Management (MHIM), and Master of Publishing and Copyrights Studies (MPCS) (Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, 2006). These four professional areas of specialization in librarianship indicate many different areas a graduate of this profession could be employed. A graduate from this department could work virtually in any organization. He can work in a library (there are many of them - public, school, university, special libraries); he can work in any company that generates records (Is there any organization or company or institution that does not generate records?); this means that graduates of this profession can work anywhere. He can work in a hospital or in a health organization keeping and maintaining health documents. He can work in a publishing company, employed as an editor or as a records manager. Does the public know these about the profession?

Application of ICT in ones profession is an assurance of continuous existence of that profession. LIS should train his students on how to adopt and adapt the new technologies in their workplace. Being relevant in the society of this 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on this. The twenty-second century will bring its own technology but until then let this profession use what is in vogue and be ready to change when need be.

### Conclusion

Development means different things to different professions. Generally, the work looked at development from three angles: personal, professional and national. These three angles of development are juxtaposed to see how LIS's professional development could enhance their visibility in the government and contribute to the overall national development.

The paper suggested practical things that LIS profession could do to be known, seen and heard. If LIS should remain viable, ICT should be embraced. Change is a necessary phenomenon that every profession should be in love with in other not to be extinct. Social network is one of the new technologies that are making the world not only to become a global village but to become an album.

Make yourself available. Do not always wait to be called. It is better, in Nigeria, to invite oneself and be asked to go back than not to be present at all. Advertise yourself in different media. Let LIS have a register of professionals and anyone whose name is not there should not be allowed to practice in government or non-government organizations. By this LIS will be recognized and be respected.

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