

EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE GRADUATES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper explored the entrepreneurship opportunities available to Library and Information Science Graduates for sustainable national development. This study became pertinent due to the increasing rate of unemployment or the difficulties in securing jobs by graduates of various library schools in the country. It has been observed by various scholars in the field that a lot of entrepreneurship opportunities are available in the profession but LIS graduates have not fully explored them. Though the introduction of entrepreneurship courses at different levels in the LIS curriculum has gone a long way in exploring some entrepreneurship opportunities; yet much need to be done in this area regarding new opportunities that emerge alongside the changes in the economy. The various opportunities presented in this paper when explored by LIS graduates, will undoubtedly reduce the unemployment rate and thereby lead to sustainable national development. Research of this nature will add to existing literature on the topic and opportunities available to be explored for self-reliance.

Keywords: Explore, Entrepreneurship, Opportunities, Library and Information, Sustainable National Development.

Introduction

As a result of the growing number of graduates of library and information science today, unemployment is rapidly increasing despite the variety of employment opportunities open for the LIS profession. To explore means, to seek for something or examine something systematically. There is an urgent need to explore the alternatives to jobs in the field of library and information science. The most viable of these alternatives is entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship simply refers to a person's ability to manipulate skills, ideas, initiatives, opportunities and turn them into reality in order to accomplish a set goal. Morrison as cited in Junaidu and Aliyu (2019) sees entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual or group of people to obtain educational skills which will enable him to explore and exploit investment opportunities as well as establish and manage a successful business enterprise. The acquisition of knowledge through education by whatever means or platforms is pivotal to the rapid development of any society and by extension leading to self-sustenance of its citizenry.

Entrepreneurship education undoubtedly prepares one for occupational fields on one hand, and for effective participation in the world of work as well as preparation for responsible citizenship on the other hand. It is also a tool for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and a way of alleviating poverty for people who can take risk and go further to start something new (Nwaka, 2009). Thus, entrepreneurship education guarantees access to diverse opportunities for higher institution graduates, including that of library and information science professionals.

The term opportunity means different things to different people. While some see it as a chance to carry out a set goal, others see it as time available to make an impact or do something meaningful. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2015) defines opportunity as a time when a particular situation makes it possible to do or achieve something. This can also be seen as a favorable occasion or circumstance to make a difference in a particular situation. Opportunity is seen as a chance for advancement, progress, or profit. These changes can be acquired and utilized by a person or group of persons to accomplish a set of goals and objectives if well-articulated. (Junaidu & Aliyu, 2019). The discovery and identification of any opportunity at any time build on a person's ability to manipulate skills, ideas or initiatives, to accomplish a set goal is referred to as an entrepreneurial opportunity. This implies that entrepreneurial opportunity provide economic value to an individual (entrepreneur) after an identified need has been met or attended to. Entrepreneurial opportunity can be obtained from various professional disciplines including LIS discipline.

Library and Information science is a profession that is concerned with the principle of library administration. It is one of the accredited courses in institutions of Higher Learning across the globe. Its curriculum is regulated by the regulatory bodies in charge of tertiary education at all levels in different countries. For instance, in Nigeria, we have the National University Commission (NUC) which regulates universities and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) regulating polytechnics and monotechnics. Given the spate of unemployment in the country among young graduates as a result of not being given the requisite skills while in school, these bodies rose to the occasion by introducing entrepreneurial education in the curriculum of all higher institutions in Nigeria. This is to ensure that young graduates in the country are prepared and trained to acquire the necessary

skills for self-employment which will enhance sustainable national development in the country. Therefore, there is an urgent need to prepare the young graduates of library and information science in Nigerian higher institutions for the necessity and benefits of self-employment for sustainable national development.

There seems to be no widely accepted definition of sustainable development. Sustainable development as defined by Brundtland Report and cited in Ajie (2018) is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

However, it is understood to involve the following goals: values and ideals: a global perspective on social, economic, and environmental policies that take into account the needs of future generations; the protection and appreciation of the needs of indigenous culture; the cultivation of economic and social equity in societies throughout the world; and the responsible and transparent implementation of government policies. To ensure sustainable development in a nation, the various institutions of government like the judiciary, legislature, agencies of government like the police, customs, army, and other relevant organizations of government have a corresponding role to play that can lead to sustainable National Development with corresponding peace and economic growth. The extent to which the emergence of economic, social, cultural, and other related activities such as entrepreneurial activities has affected the sustenance of economic growth is the bedrock of sustainable development.

Significance of entrepreneurship education to library and information science

With the high rate of unemployment in the nation, most of our young youths including some of our graduates have seen social vices such as kidnapping, drug-related offenses, political thuggery, cybercrime, oil bunkering, and so on as an alternative means of surviving. As observed by Ekere and Ekere (2012), this situation portrays the failure of the nation's Educational system and underlines an inherent mismatch between the type of education received by Nigerian graduates and the needs of government agencies, private, industrial establishments, and other employers of labor. Hence, educational authorities have canvassed for the introduction of entrepreneurial education in the curricula of all higher institutions in Nigeria by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE) to stem the tide.

The above development has necessitated the need to adequately prepare our future graduates especially graduates of library and information science education to brace up for the gains and pains of self-employment as a way out of the malady. The advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has brought significant transformation to library activities from an erstwhile conventional method to a modern method of library services. This development, however, has brought a change in the way librarianship is being practiced with an emphasis on skills acquisition to be able to cope with the demands of the 21st century. Today, as a result of information overload where there is too much information available on a particular topic, the demand for this information has become more sophisticated than ever making it a necessity for graduates of library and information to be equipped with relevant entrepreneurship skills that would make them independent and marketable in their

undertakings as future librapreneurs. According to Junaidu & Aliyu (2019), this can best be achieved if the concerned stakeholders like the Departments of Library and Information Science in our universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, library schools, the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) can systematically accommodate entrepreneurship education courses in their curriculum as this will help greatly in the production of sound graduates of LIS.

Entrepreneurship education will undoubtedly equip LIS graduates with the requisite skills needed to navigate and drive the actualization of self-reliance and profit maximization. Thus, entrepreneurial skills can be acquired through conference attendance, seminar, and workshop participation as this will expose them to the countless entrepreneurial opportunities available in the profession.

Entrepreneurial opportunities available to Library and Information Science Graduates

Several entrepreneurial opportunities are available to LIS graduates to explore in order to fulfill their entrepreneurship dreams. These include but are not limited to the following:

- ✧ Information Brokerage
- ✧ Book Publishing: e-book/paperback
- ✧ Operating a Bookshop outlet
- ✧ Bookbinding workshop
- ✧ Development of library software package
- ✧ Dealing in library equipment
- ✧ Operating a reprographic center/internet café
- ✧ Library Consultancy Services

Information brokerage: This is a business or an entrepreneurial opportunity designed to source a particular kind of information to sell or disseminate it to a registered client. A person or company that deals in this kind of business is known as an information broker. He is a person that uses various information resources including the internet and other online services that specialize in databases and books to satisfy the information needs of client. Information brokerage is based on a request from the client for an agreed sum of money. For instance, News agencies and financial analysts are more involved in this line of business. LIS graduates can venture into it by doing indexing and abstracting useful information sources, cataloguing and classification, compilation of bibliography, online literature search, and so on for information seekers on demand

Book publishing: This is the art of making information and literature that has been compiled into a book available to the public usually at a designated price or for free. There are two major types of book publishing, traditional and self publishing. LIS graduates can pick up a career or entrepreneurship skill in book publishing which is said to have the characteristic of all businesses. As observed by Ganapathi (2020), the basic objective of the publishing and printing industry is to produce the books for education which can change the individual's social outlook.

Publishing is also considered a service to the society apart from being an entrepreneurial opportunity. He/she can go into online publishing of e-book or paperback on

Amazon.com or other related platforms and earn royalties. Being a professional, the due process of acquiring the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for books and International Standard Serial Number for serial publications must be strictly followed (Anyanwu et al, 2013). For one to become a book publisher, certain skills are needed such as, a good communication skill, passion for reading, writing skill, critical thinking skill, organizational skill, attention to details, among others. Some of these skills are acquired by LIS graduates from the delivery of the course content, during internship/industrial attachment, book review exercise, and so on. This is another veritable avenue or opportunity to be explored by LIS graduates thereby reducing unemployment in the society.

Operating a bookshop outlet: Librarianship has offered LIS graduates enormous knowledge in books and its parts. Books of different kind on different disciplines can be sourced and displayed at conferences, seminars or workshop venues where attendees are expected to patronize and make their choices on any relevant one or taken to educational institutions for advertisement and probable purchase. This medium offers a good entrepreneurial opportunity to young librarians and LIS graduates to be self-employed.

Book binding workshop: This is a service unit where books, office records, files, projects and other important documents are bound so as to prolong their life span or usage, as well as restore them to their original shape and prevent further damages. This skill can be acquired from printing presses, schools, colleges and other relevant agencies. According to Junaidu and Aliyu (2019), this business can go a long way in supporting LIS graduates to be self-employed, employ others and also attend to their basic/domestic needs.

Developing library software package: the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has increased dependence on technology in personal life as well as in business environment. LIS graduates can venture into library software development and proliferation with the little knowledge acquired in basic computer operating system and other related courses. It will be good to study and evaluate the present library software in use by libraries and then look into the possibility of them being replaced with open source software. However, consideration must be given to acquisition of equipment, proficient partners and the cost involved in setting up this kind of business, but it is a lucrative opportunity.

Dealing in Library Equipment: The production, sale and repair of library equipment such as catalogue cabinet, book display rack, book trolley, metal/wooden shelves, reading carrels, circulation counter, newspaper/magazine racks, and so on offers another entrepreneurial opportunity to LIS graduates. Libraries source and use this equipment for the processing and storage of their information materials. Suppliers of these equipment are needed by new and already existing libraries. So, LIS professionals stand a better chance to source for them and make them available to institutions or organizations that need them. A catalogue of such equipment could be sent to libraries for awareness and patronage or taken to conference venues where professional librarians are meeting. This provide self - employment for young librarians.

Operating a reprographic center/internet café: Reprographic business or service is in high demand and required by many individuals or institutions today and as such, they are required in both residential and commercial areas. It is a growing market and it is highly competitive. Reprographic business is often combined with typing of documents, printing and internet services operation. This undoubtedly provides a good opportunity for LIS graduates to be self – reliant and avoid dependence on government or parents.

Library Consultancy Services: The nature of this kind of service is usually in the form of advisory, supervisory and offering of professional counselling to either new or existing establishment in setting up and running a library by someone with specialized knowledge and experience in librarianship. Services offered under this arrangement may include manpower training development, library collection building, cataloguing and classification, library automation, periodical processing, and so on. These services are provided for an agreed fee to newly established libraries on demand. It requires little or no cost for a fresh LIS graduates to venture into and become self-reliant.

In addition to the above entrepreneurial opportunities, Butt and Ahmad (2022) summarized the opinions of various experts on major areas of entrepreneurial opportunities open for LIS graduates to include: digitization, scanning and digital publishing services, documentation services, archival services in liaison with archival organization, knowledge management (KM) to organizations, biographer or biography writer, library automation services, editing services for books and periodicals, marketing and advertising agency, preservation and conservation services, website developer or web administration and maintenance, services to special users such as visually impaired, private library or book club, among others.

Skills required by LIS Graduates for entrepreneurship engagement

For LIS graduates to be able to explore the opportunities mentioned above, Jain as cited in Ganapathi (2020) opined that certain entrepreneurial competencies should be possessed for optimal performance. These include: systematic planning, efficiency orientation, self - confidence, assertiveness, persuasion, problem solving, initiative, opportunity seeking, use of influence strategy, information seeking, persistence, commitment to work contract and concern for high quality of work.

In a related development, Igbo cited in Tondo and Ugba (2023), identified four categories of competencies or skills required by LIS graduates for a successful entrepreneurial venture as managerial skills which include ability to communicate effectively, plan and develop good human relationship; marketing and sales skills which include ability to determine the effect to which product will sell, budget and forecast as well as determine current and future trends in sale of products; accounting and financial skills which include knowledge of costing and ability to interpret financial statement and obtain loans; and general business skills which include ability to assess facilities and equipment required, ability to judge performance of employee, understanding basic steps involved in starting a business and ability to find out source of capital to start a business

The combination of these knowledge, skills, motives and training will result in having successful entrepreneurs that will bring about economic transformation and sustainable national development.

Challenges to exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities among LIS graduates

The following are challenges hindering the exploration of entrepreneurship opportunities among LIS graduates.

- ❖ Lack of emphasis on the teaching of entrepreneurial opportunities in library schools, skills required as well as their practical demonstration. This is because, most lecturers in library schools do not have entrepreneurial mind which is displayed in their mode of teaching, coupled with the non inclusion of entrepreneurship course related to LIS curriculum. This have effect on the goals of entrepreneurship education as spelt out by the regulating bodies.
- ❖ Lack of organized trip or excursion visit to successful LIS entrepreneurs where students can learn and be motivated to explore such opportunities. This of course stems from the apathy demonstrated in the mode of teaching the course by the lecturers handling them since you cannot give what you don't have.
- ❖ Under-funding of tertiary institutions and by extension library schools is a major challenge. With little or no fund made available, nothing tangible can be achieved in terms of entrepreneurship education. This was corroborated by Tondo and Ugba (2023) who posited that if there is no fund the library schools may not be able to manufacture the necessary equipment needed to impact the right skill to students. On the part of LIS graduates, most of them do not have the initial capital needed to start their choice enterprise and are also unaware of institutions or agencies to approach for funding such as Bank of Industry (BOI).
- ❖ Inadequate opportunity for training, workshop and seminar where LIS lecturers could acquire knowledge and have interface with sponsors or collaborators that encourage entrepreneurship or business ideas to thrive. As pointed out by Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013), many LIS professionals do not know how to interact with necessary entities such as banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors and advertising agencies who are indispensable players in every successful business.
- ❖ Lack of ICT skills. Virtually everything done today is ICT driven because we are in digital age. Therefore, lack of this skill will hinder effective and practical exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities among LIS graduates. Most library schools do not have adequate ICT facilities for their students to learn and this hinder access to practical sessions/hands on, worsened still by erratic power supply. This have adverse effect on our graduates as they usually approach life after school unprepared. □

In view of the above challenges, certain recommendations are hereby put forward:

- ❖ Library and Information Science schools or departments should place more emphasis on the teaching of entrepreneurial opportunities in librarianship at different levels as well as the skills required and practical demonstration where necessary to become successful in them.
- ❖ Trips or excursion visit to successful LIS entrepreneurs who have being in the practice for some time should be encouraged for them to learn the rudiment, challenges and some experience that would help them to start their own career.

- ❖ Adequate funding of tertiary institutions and library schools in particular by the government will help to put in place the equipment needed for hands on and workshop sessions so as to become familiar with the tools needed to make a successful entrepreneur.
- ❖ Opportunities for training, conferences, seminars and workshops should be given to LIS lecturers to be up to date with state of the art and current trends in entrepreneurial education in order to make maximum impact on the students in preparation for life after school.
- ❖ Acquisition of ICT skill should be given top priority by LIS professionals as most of the opportunities mentioned above require proficiency in computer and technological related appliances. Our students should be given this exposure before their graduation to prepare them for entrepreneurial life after school

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship has been seen as a panacea to the alleviation of unemployment and poverty in any society. With the frequent review of higher institutions' curriculum, entrepreneurial opportunities are being introduced and taught in various disciplines library and information science inclusively to reduce over dependence on government job that has become elusive and heavily politicized. However, there are a lot of entrepreneurial opportunities to be explored by LIS graduates apart from the ones mentioned above. Effort should be made by LIS graduates to venture into any of the above opportunities upon graduation as the present economic situation in developing nations like Nigeria, demands self-employment for a sustainable national development.

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