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Assessment of Nigerian and Ugandan LIS Programs in Meeting the Demands of the Digital Age

Dianah T. Kacunguzi and Noah Samuel

Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, USA

Abstract. In today's world where digital seems everything and everything seems digital, Library and Information Science as a discipline is continuously struggling to keep up with diverse platforms through which it can satisfy the demands of the job market. This is especially so in Africa, as several Western institutions responsible for the training of librarians have done a considerable job in keeping up with the professional demands of the 21st century information environment. To help the African LIS schools fulfill these demands, programs in LIS need to be constantly reviewed and revised to match up with the changes in the professional field. In this paper, we assessed the curricula of four LIS programs in East and West African countries in order to see if the curricula are in sync with the professional demands of librarians in the emerging digital-dominated information market. Our comparison was based on similar LIS program in the United States. Our final analysis shows that although all the four programs considered in Nigeria and Uganda are not adequately digitally inclusive, the two schools in Nigeria are even far from achieving digitally attractive LIS curricula. We thus recommend that both the two schools considered in Nigeria need to improve on the technology and online information management content of their curricula to reflect the 21st Century skill set demands for Librarians.

Keywords. Curriculum assessment; LIS education, Digital age, Nigeria ; Uganda.

1. Introduction

The realities of the present day digital age are upon us; upon the world; upon different professions, as well as upon Library and Information Science as a discipline. Today's environment is characterized by developments in technology, over abundance of information, changes in the demand for LIS service delivery and a magnitude of challenges in Library and Information Science (LIS) education (Okello-Obura & Kigongo Bukenya, 2011; Okojie, 2013; Siddiqui & Walia, 2013). Although LIS professionals contribute immensely to national development (Malekabadizadeh, Shokraneh & Hosseni,

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2009), they are often limited by the demands of the changing job market (Okello-Obura & Kigongo Bukenya, 2011).

According to Davis & Moran (2005), the LIS job market has been transformed by the digital revolution with dramatic impact on LIS graduates and the way they perform professionally. It has been commonly noted by employers that LIS graduates do not meet the requirements of the jobs applied for in terms of specialist skills in areas such as web development and online Information Management (Raju, 2015). Albeit the challenges presented by the changing technological landscape are global, Africa is one of the continents that consistently struggle with challenges of LIS education for its graduates (Ocholla and Bothma, 2007).

LIS education has been problematic in Africa and has had a fair discussion in literature. LIS education in Africa has its roots in South Africa from as early as 1938, later introduced in Uganda, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana in the 1960's (Raju, 2005; Okello-Obura & Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011). According to Ocholla (2008), South Africa has the biggest numbers of LIS schools (12), followed by Nigeria with 8 schools and Kenya with 7 schools. Sadly, there are some African countries that do not have LIS schools and have to constantly send their students to neighboring schools to acquire an education (Raju, 2015). Although some countries like South Africa have well equipped LIS schools and have integrated ICTs into their programs (Minishi-Majanja, 2009), there are many other countries where the state of LIS educational affairs is daunting. Some of these countries include Nigeria and Uganda. With LIS professionals in these two countries facing the wake of the digital revolution and its challenges, there is need for effective response in terms of equipping LIS students with relevant skills to compete favorably on the continent and on the global scene.

The history of LIS education in Nigeria is tied to the establishment of the first Library program at the University of Ibadan in 1960 (Diso and Njoku, 2007). From the inception in 1960, LIS programs in Nigeria have been increased to over a dozen due to the increase in the number of federal, state and private universities. It is interesting that one of the LIS programs in our study is the first of such programs in Nigeria; the Library Archival and Information Studies program at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria which was established in 1960 as reported by Diso and Njoku (2007). Some of the challenges faced by library science programs in Nigeria are institution-based and similar to other challenges faced by other programs within Nigerian schools. For example, Diso and Njoku (2007) analyzed four LIS programs in Nigeria and identified the prevailing challenges that is affecting the quality of the programs including curricula related, stating such challenges as funding and lack of resources required to meet the demanding training need.

Uganda on the other hand, had its first LIS program established in 1963 at the East African School of Librarianship (EASL), at the then Makerere University

College (now Makerere University) with certificate and diploma courses in librarianship leading a much later introduction of a Bachelor of Library and Information Science in 1989 (Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011). The establishment of EASL was due to regional demand and agreement from three East African countries of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania to support their mission "to become a center of excellence responsible for producing national, regional and international high quality information professionals capable of responding to present and future needs" (EASLIS, 2016).

To effectively support its mission in the changing environment, EASL had a name change in 1995 to include aspects of information science in its agenda and became known as the East African School of Library and Information Science (EASLIS) (Lutumwa and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2004). Additionally, there was establishment of library programs at other public universities in Uganda including Uganda Christian University –Mukono; Kabale University; Uganda Management Institute; Kyambogo University; Busoga University with promising proposals from other private universities to introduce LIS programs (Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011).

In this study, we analyse LIS programs from two Schools from Nigeria and two Schools from Uganda in order to identify gaps in relation to digital inclusion and provide useful current information to LIS educators in Africa to make informed decisions while revising their curricula. The two institutions selected in Nigeria are Federal Universities including University of Ibadan (UI) located in the Western part of Nigeria and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. UI's program is called Library Archival and Information Studies while UNN's program is called Library and Information Science. The two Schools selected from Uganda are East African School of Library and Information Science (EASLIS) located at Makerere University Kampala and Library and Information Science program at the Uganda Christian University (UCU).

The reasons behind the choice of the two countries and programs analyzed herein include; they happen to be leading programs in the field within each of the countries considered, exposure of the authors who hail from Nigeria and Uganda respectively, our current understanding and experiential knowledge of similar programs in the United States as well as the desire to have a meaningful comparison geared towards informing and potentially having an understanding of the differences in LIS programs between the two countries.

2. Method

In examining this question of curricula meeting the market demands of LIS professionals in the two countries, we juxtaposed the LIS curricula in four institutions in Nigeria and Uganda especially regarding inclusion of courses focusing on some aspect of digital librarianship in the curriculum. The four schools selected in the two countries are leading programs in the field and the

curriculum of each of the schools shows some resemblance with similar programs in the US. Though Library and Information Science related programs are named differently across different schools, there is no significant difference in the names of the programs in the four schools under consideration.

The four programs have their names as: (a) Library Archival and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (b) Library and Information Science at the University of Nigeria (c) Library and Information Science at the Makerere University, Uganda, and (d) Library and Information Science at Uganda Christian University. These programs are offered from undergraduate to PhD levels at the University of Ibadan, Makerere University, and the other two schools both offer Bachelor and some other advanced degrees but not PhD. Unlike in most Western Universities where LIS programs are offered at the Masters and PhD levels, a graduate of these four programs are regarded as full librarian regardless of whether they proceeded to a graduate degree in the field or not. Differences are seen in terms of the length of time required to complete the degree in each of these schools. For the two schools from Nigeria, the degree completion takes four years while the two schools in Uganda require three years of study to award a degree in the field.

Our data gathering involves accessing the course catalogues of these LIS programs via their institutional websites. After having access to the course catalogues, we proceeded to examine the course content of each school and finally to identify courses reflecting some focus on technology for information management in general. Our final analysis which is presented in the table in the next section identified the number of courses in the course catalogue of each school that, based on our assessment, are deemed to be technology focused courses based on the name assigned to them on the catalogue.

3. Results

The four schools under analysis have varying curricula in terms of the total number of courses, core courses (C), required courses (R), elective courses (E) , IT related courses as well as credit units. The results of the curricula analysis are presented below.

Table 1: LIS Programs and IT Related Courses

Institutions	Overall Number of Courses (Undergraduate)	IT related Courses	Credit Units
UI	42 (Core = 10; Required = 22; Electives = 10)	Computers in Libraries (R)	

UNN	38 (Core = 21; Electives = 17)	Computers and Data Processing (C) Contemporary technology in libraries (C)	2 2
EASLIS	36 (Core= 30; Required = 6; Electives = 0)	Information Technology I (C) Information Technology II (C) Analysis of Information Systems (C) Database Management and Information Retrieval (C) Web Document Management (C) Multimedia Librarianship (C) Automation of Library and Information Systems (C) Management of electronic Resources (C)	4 4 3 4 3 4 3 4
UCU	36 (Core = 34; Elective = 2)	Introduction to Information Technology (C) Information Systems (C) Web Based Resources (C) Database Management Systems I (C) Website Design (C) Database Management Systems II (C) Digital Library Services (E) Business Information Systems (E) Geographical Information System (E)	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Source: UNN: http://education.unn.edu.ng/library-information-science-course-modules; UI: http://educ.ui.edu.ng/courseslib; EASLIS: http://easlis.mak.ac.ug/index.php/programmes/blis; **UCU:** http://education.ucu.ac.ug/index.php/study/undergraduate/105-bachelor-of-library-and-information-science#course-details

The table above reveals that the Bachelor degree of the Library Archival and Information Studies program at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, has a total number of 42 courses out of which there are 10 core courses, 22 required and 10 electives. Similarly, the Library and Information Science program at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka has 38 courses and 21 of them are core while 17 are electives. The Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program at EASLIS has 36 courses of which 30 are core courses and 6 are required to be taken from the faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, Science and Fine Art. For the required course, students are at liberty to choose 2 courses from outside EASLIS in the first and second semesters of their first year respectively and one course for each semester in their second year. There are no elective courses offered by

the school which means that all courses in the three years of study are considered core. On the other hand, the BLIS program offered at UCU has 36 courses of which 34 are core courses and only 2 are electives. All courses offered in the first two semesters at UCU are core, only allowing students to choose from four elective courses in their third year.
Additionally, it was revealed that UI has only one required IT related course, UNN has two core IT related courses while for their counterpart institutions in Uganda, it was revealed that EASLIS has eight core IT related courses, while UCU has six IT related courses and three elective IT related courses. All the courses listed in the table have varying credit units showing mostly three credits for many of the courses. It is interesting to see that most of these programs make a considerable number of the courses compulsory or core for the students as opposed to how the course requirement is structured other LIS programs in the United States as we will explore briefly in the next section.

4. Discussion

To start with, among the four programs considered, the two institutions in Uganda have more IT related courses compared to the ones in Nigeria. For example, among the 36 courses offered at EASLIS, eight of them are focused on technology-related courses and as indicated, these courses are marked as core courses which mean it is a must to be taken by the students. Similarly for UCU, nine courses out of the total 36 courses are technology-related and six of these are core courses. In this wise, there is significant difference in the number of courses on technology between the two schools in Nigeria and those in Uganda. As seen in Table 1, among the 42 courses offered at the Library Archival and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan Nigeria, only one course has a technology focus. Similarly among the 38 courses offered at the Library and Information Science program of the University of Nigeria, only two have technology focus.

While considering why a Library program in such a school as the University of Ibadan in Nigeria is predominantly focused on the traditional library courses without much focus on Information Technology related courses, we discovered that within the University of Ibadan, there is a distinct program for Information Science called the Africa Regional Centre for Information Science with IT related courses. However, having a separate Information Science program need not affect the content of a Library program in a School because the Library program is supposed to be focused on the training of Librarians. Technology skills are required as part of training for Librarians in the 21st Century job market as noted earlier. Also, as noted by Davis and Moran (2005), the transformation in the LIS job market requires change in the curricula of LIS schools in order to ensure that graduates are empowered with the requisite set of skills needed in today's demanding Library environment.

From our assessment, it is evident that the programs at EASLIS and UCU both located in Uganda have considerable amount of technology related courses in

relation to the situation of the LIS programs at UI and UNN both located in Nigeria. While our analysis was based on the curricula of these programs, we also hypothesize that graduates of the LIS programs in these two schools at Uganda are likely to be more familiar with Information Management technologies required by Librarians or be in possession of the needed skill sets for a 21st Century Librarian compared to their counterpart in the two schools considered in Nigeria.

In comparison to the requirement for a degree in Library and Information Science in the United States, we will consider the LIS program at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. While we noted earlier that the LIS programs in the two African countries considered are offered at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the LIS program at the University of Illinois is offered at the graduate level. The Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at University of Illinois offers Master, advanced certificate, as well as PhD degrees. In terms of course requirement for graduation, the MS/LIS degree requires 40 credit hours of coursework with only two required courses. Among these two required courses, one has a focus on understanding the library as an institution and the other has a technology focus. The students are at liberty to shape their degree as far as other courses to be taken are concerned (Graduate School of Library and Information Science, n.d.). Fundamental difference between the Schools in Uganda and Nigeria with that of the US can therefore be seen in the way the program is structured. Students at GSLIS after taking two required courses with focus on library and technology concepts required for 21st Century librarians, they also have the opportunity of selecting other courses including several other technology-focused courses, to soothe their focus on the program.

The two schools considered in Uganda have significant number of technology-focused courses and most of these courses are either required or compulsory. The Nigerian schools on the other hand have more traditionally focused Library courses with just one technology related course in one school and two in the other. We believe the differences noted in the curricula of these schools will have impact on the training of the graduates of these programs especially regarding how they will be able to cope with the demands brought by digital technology in the management of information in the age of big *datarism*. Knowing that the current skill set demands for Librarians is sporadically surpassing the traditional skills required to manage information resources in physical spaces, and that skills such as online information management and digital librarianship are constantly on the rise, we recommend that library programs constantly review and make appropriate changes to cover these gaps. We conclude our thoughts on this in the next section.

5. Conclusion

In this short study, we set out to examine how LIS programs in Uganda and Nigeria are meeting the training need of 21st Century librarians through the

reflection of the emerging required skill set for information professionals in their curricula. We noted that according to Okello-Obura and Kigongo Bukenya (2011), there is constantly a gap between the demand of the labor market and the training of LIS professionals in most LIS schools in Africa. Our analysis of the curricula of four LIS programs, two of which are from Nigeria and two from Uganda shows significant difference not just in the content of the four schools but between the two countries. While the two schools considered in Uganda happen to have considerable number of technology-focused courses, the two schools in Nigeria are still replete with traditional library courses in this era of digital domination.

It is expedient to note that these courses have to be constantly reviewed to meet up with the changing demands of the field. LIS programs should be concerned with training graduates to be able to manage online information resources, create and manage web content, operate and maintain online catalogues, create databases for online content, be able to manage institutional repository and meet a library user's online information needs. All these demands can be met by constantly reviewing and revising curricula and including appropriate courses that will ensure that graduates of LIS programs in Africa are trained and up to the task whenever there is a demand on their skill set. These can be achieved by constantly reviewing the market demands and listening to experiences of alumni who already in the market and can be able to communicate most accurately, the skill demands of their jobs, thereby helping LIS programs to keep abreast of developments in the labor market.

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