



RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRANSFORMING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION: A STRATEGIC PATH TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND UNITY IN ADVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The nascent difficulties of insecurity, misinformation, ethnic polarization, and digital transformation have intensified the need for an educational system capable of producing professionals who can effectively manage information for national development which thrives on guaranteed national security and national unity. Library and Information Science (LIS) education occupies a strategic position in this respect because it equips professionals with competencies in information organization, information literacy etc. However, the current LIS curriculum in many Nigerian institutions requires significant transformation to meet emerging societal and security demands. This paper examined the relationship between transforming LIS education and the promotion of national security and unity in diversity in Nigeria. It discussed the concepts of LIS education, national security, and unity in diversity, while highlighting the evolving role of librarians as digital educators, advocates of media literacy, and promoters of social inclusion etc. The paper identified some challenges confronting LIS education such as obsolete curricula, weak industry collaboration, and limited integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. It further proposed strategic measures to reform LIS education such as curriculum review. The paper concludes that transformed LIS education is indispensable for producing information professionals capable of combating misinformation, promoting informed citizenship, preserving cultural heritage, nurturing social cohesion, and supporting evidence-based governance. Such transformation will significantly contribute to sustainable national security and unity in Nigeria's culturally diverse society.

Keywords: Library, information science education, national security, unity in diversity, information literacy, digital transformation.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's vision for sustainable national development is closely linked to its ability to ensure security, peaceful coexistence, and national unification despite its ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. The idea behind national integration is simply unity, oneness not minding all our differences as a people. In other words, it's unity in diversity (Echem, Lulu-Pokubo and Eberechi, 2018). Nigeria continues to face various security challenges including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cybercrime, separatist agitations, communal conflicts, and the rapid spread of misinformation through digital platforms. These challenges have increasingly confirmed that national security goes beyond military operations to include information management, civic education, digital literacy, and informed citizen participation.

Library and information science education is a formalized training aimed at increasing the capacity of people for effective and efficient library service delivery (Igbinovia, Oladokun and Ajani, 2024). Library and Information Science (LIS) education in the 21st century has become increasingly relevant in addressing these challenges because it prepares professionals who organize, disseminate, and evaluate information for diverse communities. Modern librarians are no longer custodians of printed books alone; they are digital information specialists, knowledge managers, educators, research partners, and advocates of media and information literacy. Therefore, LIS education must continually advance to equip graduates with competencies required by an information society.

Universally, rapid technological developments involving artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analytics, digital repositories, etc. have transformed the library and information science profession. Nigerian library schools are therefore expected to reform their curricula to replicate these inclusive realities while responding to national priorities such as peace building, national unity, and sustainable development. Recent studies reveal that many Nigerian LIS programs still allot limited attention to emerging technologies and modern-day professional competencies, thereby creating a gap between current graduates' skills and labour market opportunities.

Transforming LIS education is therefore not merely an academic necessity but a national imperative. A transformed curriculum can empower future librarians to fight fake news, support informed decision-making, preserve Nigeria's cultural diversity, encourage inclusive access to information, and strengthen democratic governance. According to Rath (2017), LIS schools will continue to face challenges of digital era except educators, practitioners and researchers of library and information profession work together and bring qualitative improvement through curriculum reforms.

2.0. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

2.1. Library and Information Science Education

Library and Information Science education refers to the systematic, formal teaching and the training process of preparing LIS students with theoretical knowledge, technical skills, ethical values, and professional competencies required for managing information resources and services across libraries, archives, documentation centres, and digital information environments. It encompasses teaching, research, practical training, and lifelong professional development in areas such as, digital librarianship, information retrieval, research support etc. LIS education is contextually defined as the formalized and systematized training provided to students in an institution of higher learning to



increase their knowledge ,skill, and competency level to effectively and efficiently deliver library and information services (Igbinovia , Oladokun and Ajani 2024).

Modern LIS education has shifted from traditional librarianship towards multidisciplinary information science that integrates ICT, artificial intelligence, data management, digital scholarship, and user-centered information services. The curricula of LIS education needs to adapt continuously to integrate emerging technologies , digital literacy skills and ethical considerations The primary goal of LIS is to produce competent information professionals with the required skills who can facilitate access to information ,support learning and research , preserve knowledge resources ,and contribute to national development .

2.2. National Security

Security is safety from danger in any form .National security refers to the protection of a nation's citizens, institutions, territorial integrity, economy, information infrastructure etc. against both internal and external threats. In modern times, security includes military security, economic security, food security, cyber security etc. National security can be viewed as the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threats ...in whatever dimension you look at national security, it has to do with the state of human safety and good governance (Omehia, 2020).

Information plays a dominant role in national security, it aids in dispersing harmful rumours that can breach national security, because well informed citizens are less vulnerable to manipulation, misinformation, hate speech, radicalization, and violent extremism. Information helps to dissipate rumours, propaganda, and hate speeches which are catalyst to civil disturbances (Omehia, 2020).

2.3. Unity in Diversity

National unity refers to a nation that is fully merged where every citizen has a sense of belonging. Some of the dynamics that promote national unity include fair distribution of resources, education, and national symbols. While factors limiting national unity include religious conflicts, economic inequality, divisive politics, religious conflict, ethnicity etc. National unity is very important in achieving development in a society ... and this cannot be achieved without information generation, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination (Bube, 2022).

Unity in diversity refers to peaceful coexistence among people of different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds while maintaining mutual respect, equality, social justice, and national identity. Bube (2022) proposed that LIS professionals can promote national unity through the, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information materials that are genuine, devoid of hate and should be disseminated at the right time, to the right users using appropriate channels.

Libraries and librarians can contribute significantly to national security and unity in diversity by providing equitable access to knowledge, preserving indigenous cultures, promoting intercultural dialogue, and ensuring that no community is omitted from information services. This can only be achieved through a transformed LIS education in Nigeria.



Challenges Facing LIS Education in Nigeria

Despite its enormous potential, several factors tend to hinder successful LIS education in Nigeria. They include;

Outdated Curriculum

Many LIS schools continue to emphasize traditional practices devoting insufficient attention to emerging technologies. There is a worldwide phenomenon of convergence of library, documentation, information and knowledge areas and a new curriculum design needs to take this fact into account (Rath, 2017). Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2022), and Abubakar (2021), identified lack of uniform curriculum, paucity of lecturers with PhD, poor ICT literacy among LIS lecturers which tends to negatively affect the trainings provided. While some emphasize more library science courses, others especially the newer schools appear to operate modified curricula by striking a balance between library and information science. One of the primary challenges is striking a balance between traditional library practices and the demands of a rapidly evolving information environment (Igbinovia, Oladokun, and Ajani, 2024). The dynamic nature of technology necessitates constant updates to the curriculum, requiring educators to navigate the fine line between tradition and innovation (Igbinovia, Oladokun, and Ajani, 2024).

Inadequate ICT Infrastructure

Technology is an essential requirement in the development of modern library schools to meet with worldwide standards. In order to ensure that LIS graduates are well grounded in e-learning, emerging technologies should be the drivers of the LIS education. This notwithstanding, many LIS schools are fraught with poor internet connectivity, obsolete computer laboratories, irregular electricity supply, and inadequate digital library facilities.

Inadequate Funding

Insufficient funding affects curriculum implementation, research, acquisition of modern technologies, and staff development. Yemi-Peters and Oladokun in (Igbinovia, Oladokun Igbinovia, Oladokun and Ajani 2024) observed that limited resources, both financial and technological hinder the development of comprehensive LIS programs, particularly in developing countries.

Shortage of Skilled Personnel

Continuous technological changes require regular retraining of lecturers and practicing librarians. The LIS educators require keeping themselves up to date with latest publications including e-books and e-journals. Learning resources through Library website could provide unlimited access to all categories of users with variety and less cost (Rath, 2017).

Weak Industry Collaboration

Collaboration between universities, libraries, ICT industries, government agencies, and private organizations remains inadequate, limiting students' practical exposure.



Low Public Awareness

Many prospective students are often confused about the professionalism of LIS while some still perceive librarianship as a profession centered solely on books, resulting in declining enrolment despite expanding employment opportunities in information management. Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2022), noted that many professionals in other fields such as law, medicine etc. tend to look down on LIS as a profession. Students from more popular disciplines also tend to claim superiority over LIS students, this tend to discourage and demoralizes LIS students.

Open and Distant Education:

It has been opined by many experts that LIS education through distance education mode by open universities and correspondence course institutes are engaged in overproduction of LIS graduates and post graduates diluting the quality of both the courses and products (Rath, 2017).

LIS education faces the challenge of preparing graduates for roles that may not have existed a decade ago, such as data scientists, user experience designers, and information architects (Igbinovia, Oladokun and Ajani 2024).

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. The Qualitative data were generated from published documents while the authors critically evaluate the underlying ideologies and methods in various articles using content analyses and presented balance discourses on the nexus between the challenges of LIS education and national security/ unity.

4.0. DISCOURSES

4.1. Nexus between Challenges of LIS education on Nigerian National Security and Unity

A non or inadequately reformed LIS education may result to the fragile Information Literacy and Critical Thinking: inadequate LIS education limits the ability of citizens to identify misinformation, fake news, and extremist propaganda. This can fuel insecurity, ethnic tensions, and social conflicts. In another dimension, poor access to reliable information which may be as a result of inadequately trained LIS professionals that may struggle to provide timely and accurate information services. Also, lack of access to reliable information can thwart informed-decision making and national development.

Scarcity of skilled information professionals: challenges such as scarce funding, outdated facilities, and insufficient practical training produce graduates who may not meet present-day information needs, this dwindles the information sectors contribution to peace building and national security. Reduced capacity to combat cyber threats: obsolete curricula and insufficient ICT training weaken the ability of LIS graduates to address cyber security and digital information management challenges; this creates exposures to cybercrime and information gaps.

Widening digital divide: inadequate technological infrastructure in LIS schools contributes to uneven access to information resources; such inequalities can deepen social inclusion and weaken national unity. Similarly, weak promotion of cultural understanding: LIS professionals play a key role preserve Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage through digitization. Cultural conservation strengthens



national identity while promoting respect for diversity. Ill equipped LIS professionals may be less effective in nurturing intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and national integration. Curricula transformation prepares graduates who are capable of solving contemporary societal problems rather than merely managing traditional libraries. Omehia (2020) posits that there is need for correct and appropriate information.

He opined that LIS education can fit into this position through the training of conscientious information specialists to render quality information services capable of restructuring the minds of the youths (citizens) for peace and national security. Ossai-Ugbah (2013) and Omehia (2020) are of the opinion that LIS education professionals promote information and media literacy which is the ability of an individual to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content responsibly. It enables professionals to educate communities on responsible use of digital platforms and social media. This helps reduce cybercrime, hate speech, misinformation etc. which can threaten national security and the country's unity. Information-literate citizens can identify credible information sources, verify facts, and resist misinformation, fake news, and online propaganda that often fuel insecurity and ethnic conflicts.

Modern LIS education encourage digital inclusion by arming students with competencies in digital technologies, thereby empowering libraries to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural communities, the well to and the not well to do in the society. Provision of maximum, accurate and timely information remains the only means through which the real integration of people in a country like Nigeria with diverse political, religious, economic etc. ideologies can be greatly achieved. To allow every Nigerian to read from the same page, it is important to flash the searchlight of information dissemination on restive areas so that they cannot be used to destroy the (hard earned peace and unity the country is presenting enjoying)(Ossai-Ugbah, 2013) .

Additionally, transformed LIS education strengthens research and evidence-based policymaking. Academic librarians support researchers, government agencies, and policymakers with reliable information necessary for informed decision-making on security, education, health, and economic development among others. Information is a powerful tool that can shape public perceptions, guide decision-making, and influence the course of events (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013). Beyond their conventional functions, libraries can serve as crucial hubs for gathering, processing, and disseminating information that can be used by security agencies, policymakers, and the general public... by promoting education ,literacy ,and critical thinking among the populace, libraries can play a significant role in countering the narratives and ideologies that fuel insurgency and violence (Jibril and Adam, 2024)

Strategic Measures for Transforming LIS Education in Nigeria

To position LIS education as a catalyst for national security and unity, the following measures are envisaged.

Comprehensive review of LIS curricula to incorporate emerging technologies such as AI, machine learning etc. to meet up with global best practices. Adoption of competency-based and outcome-based LIS education aligned with global professional standards. Increased government investment in ICT infrastructure, digital libraries, smart classrooms, and internet connectivity in libraries, schools and designated community centers to be carried out in conjunction with professional bodies.



Continuous professional development programmes for lecturers and practicing librarians in areas of technological advancements. Stronger partnerships among universities, professional bodies, libraries, ICT companies, and international organizations in areas of user education, information literacy and digital literacy. Promotion of media and information literacy as compulsory constituents of LIS education in Nigerian LIS schools.

Increased funding for research addressing misinformation, digital inclusion, national cohesion, and community resilience. Innovative, original and scientific research in LIS not only increases the quality of services but solves the practical problems of library and information profession. There is a pressing need to streamline the spread of LIS courses through distant learning Norms and standards established by our professional bodies should be strictly adhered to.

For quality assurance and maintenance of standards, there is need for national accreditation by professional bodies in Nigeria to develop norms, standards and guidelines for schools of LIS to offer courses at par with national and international standards in order to achieve standards of excellence at both at national and international levels. This will ensure that LIS schools in Nigeria embrace global best practices.

5.0. CONCLUSION

Library and Information Science education has become a crucial mechanism for justifiable national development. In an era characterized by digital disruption, misinformation, cyber threats, and increasing social disintegration, Nigeria requires information professionals who possess technological competence, ethical awareness, critical thinking, and leadership skills.

Transforming LIS education will produce graduates capable of supporting national security through information literacy, digital inclusion, research support, cultural preservation, and informed citizenship. By embracing emerging technologies, curriculum innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous professional development, Nigerian library schools can become strategic drivers of unity in diversity and sustainable national progress.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

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