

**LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE  
EDUCATION IN AFRICA:  
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

**By**

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## ● **INTRODUCTION**

- Although the subject of this paper is on LIS education in Africa, much of the presentation will pertain to Anglophone states of Africa South of the Sahara. In some instances, reference will be made to the Northern and Francophone states of Africa.
- This is so because the presenter is more versed with the situation in Anglophone Africa.
- On account of time constraint, the presenter will not dwell heavily on South Africa because this area has been extensively covered in studies conducted by among others, Ocholla, Bothma and Majanja. It is the view of this presenter that their findings should not be

## ● **LIS EDUCATION IN THE PAST**

- Until after independence in most African countries, LIS education was more concerned with training in librarianship. The training aimed at producing competent librarians to manage all types of libraries in the country.
- Librarianship in Africa owes its origin to colonialism. Colonialism introduced reading and writing among the indigenous people. Until then, the two activities were alien.
- To promote reading culture, books had to be made available. Since books were fairly expensive to an ordinary person, libraries became necessary.



- As more libraries were established on the continent to provide information support to the users, a need was expressed for trained librarians to run the services.
- Initially, the early libraries were manned by expatriate librarians educated in the west.
- However, with demand for librarians both in the colonies and mother countries, it became obvious that overseas training could not sustain this heavy demand. Something had to be done to train librarians locally.
- The above situation was made worse with the departure of expatriate librarians immediately after independence. Many librarians left because the independent states could not continue supplementing their salaries. Others

- It was therefore felt that the only way to accelerate development of libraries in Africa was to establish local training facilities.
- In addition, it was argued that overseas programmes did not meet the needs of African states because of the kind of environment the trainees went through. A local facility would address the manpower needs of African states compared overseas programmes. In one of the many reports on this subject by library consultants, it was argued that while some people will, and must continue to be sent abroad for leadership training for some time to come, and some foreign librarians will, and must, continue to provide essential library leadership here, it is important that leadership-level training of professional librarians for Africa be provided in Africa (Williams, nd).
- In South Africa, LIS education programmes started as early as 1938 with the establishment of the Dept. of Librarianship at the University of Pretoria. In 1951, bachelor's and master's degrees were started in Librarianship. In 1970, the University of Cape Town



- In East and West Africa, it was public than any other type of libraries that pressurized governments to establish LIS education programmes in the 1960s.
- In Ethiopia, library education started in 1956 but became fully developed in 1960 (Pankhurst, 1989). The programme was based at the University of Addis Ababa. Like in Anglophone-speaking countries, library education was started at diploma level. In 1988 a bachelor of arts degree was introduced to meet the growing needs for personnel with this qualification.

- **The role of Unesco in the establishment of LIS education programmes.**
- Unesco played a leading role in the establishment of LIS education programmes in Africa and in particular, Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa. The pressure emanated from public libraries.
- Unesco was convinced that illiteracy in sub-Saharan Africa could only be eradicated with support of libraries.
- A number of regional seminars was held between 1953 and 1963 on the African continent to sensitize colonial governments on the need to establish public libraries in their colonies to speed up socio-economic development.
- In an attempt to develop public libraries in Africa, a need was felt to establish library schools to provide adequate manpower to staff the libraries. As a result, library schools were established in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal, Algeria and Egypt. Since it was not cost effective for each state to establish its own library school, Unesco recommended setting up of regional



## ● **Establishment of Ghana Library School**

- Library training started at Achimota college in Ghana in 1945 with assistance from the British Council.
- The students studied for the Associateship of Library Association (ALA). This was considered an equivalent qualification to university diploma offered in some universities at that time.
- It was a two year programme. Being a regional programme, it catered for the needs of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Following the move by Nigeria to start its own school at the University College in Ibadan, Ghana opened its own school in Ghana in 1960 which was affiliated to a University College.



## **Establishment of Library School at Ibadan, Nigeria.**

- The postgraduate Diploma programme was started in 1960 with the assistance of Carnegie Corporation of New York. The applicants were required to hold an undergraduate degree from a university. Most students came from Nigeria and a few from other English-speaking states of Africa.
- **Establishment of the East African School of Librarianship (EASL)**
- EASL was established in 1963 to meet the needs of the East African states comprising Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar (presently, Tanzania). In addition, it trained students from Mauritius, Malawi and Zambia.
- Initially it started with a Certificate course in 1963

- It secured financial assistance from Unesco, Rockefeller and Swedish Government. Swedish Government assisted to put up the present school building completed in 1971.
- During its early beginning, the school provided equal number slots to the three member states.
- Unfortunately, when Idd Amin took over the reign in Uganda, his administration had a serious effect on academic programmes at Makerere University to the extent that a number of countries including Kenya withdrew their students from Uganda.
- From 1976, EASL ceased to be a regional training ground for the East African region.



- **Programmes offered in regional schools**
- - the majority were pegged on the programmes prevailing in the mother country.
- - in Anglophone Africa, the programmes offered were at non-degree level, essentially, the ALA qualification for people with either first degree or non-degree holders. Fellowship of the Library Association (FLA) was an advanced qualification to ALA. It was equated to a master's degree. Later, diploma programmes were introduced in universities.
- - In the US, LIS education was offered at degree level in universities.
- - Most staff manning libraries in Anglophone Africa were trained in Britain.

- **Concept of regional library schools**

- **- *Reasons for regional schools:***

- a) scarcity of human resources
- b) inadequate lecturers to serve the schools
- c) need to maximize donor funding from organizations such as Unesco, Rockefeller, Ford, etc.



## ● **Failure of the concept**

- a) the need for self-sufficiency in manpower development as the case in Nigeria
- b) geographical or distance from the nearest regional institution as the case between Nigeria and Ghana making it hard to access LIS education programmes.
- c) political instability and ideological differences characteristic of the 1970s, eg. Uganda during the Idd Amin era.
- d) failure to adapt to changes in the information profession, eg. sticking to diploma programmes even when the situation has changed. For instance, it was not until 1989 that EASLIS started a degree programme long after a similar programme had started at Moi University in Kenya.
- e) the high demand for library professionals in regional states making it harder for regional

## ● **PRESENT SITUATION**

- - presently, library schools mushroom in many states
- - South Africa leads the pack followed by Nigeria,
- Kenya, Uganda, Ghana
- - In East Africa, Tanzania has the least number of LIS schools



## ● **Establishment of LIS Schools in East Africa**

### ● ***a) Uganda***

- - Uganda has established a number of LIS schools. Among these is EASLIS.
- - EASLIS was established in 1963 with a certificate programme in librarianship lasting six months. Students were solicited from the entire East African region.
- - Diploma programme lasting two academic years for holders of Advanced level school certificate or holders of a certificate course in librarianship was started in 1965.
- - Unesco was instrumental in its establishment.
- - During its early beginning, the school was run by the Council for Library Training in East Africa (CLTEA) in collaboration with Makerere

## ● **The problems at EASLIS**

- - the school faced a number of problems during its early beginning: among these were:
- a) financial provision for the school. The school relied heavily on external assistance. Regional states were too reluctant to assist until Makerere took over the school in 1970.
- b) space was a major problem at the beginning until a new building was put up for them in 1971 with funding from the Swedish Government.
- - the security problem in Uganda from 1971 discouraged regional states from sending their students to the school.
- - shortage of staff arising from the exodus of expatriate staff from 1972 seriously affected



## **The weakness of the Makerere Diploma programme:**

- a) It lacked continuity. Although the diploma programme admitted people with minimum university entry qualifications, it was a terminal qualification.
- Graduates of the programme were unable to continue with higher education in LIS education unless they enrolled for another undergraduate degree.
- In Tanzania, Kaungamno (1979) cited a case where a staff from TLS on scholarship in Australia had to re-do the programme to qualify for a BLS degree.
- To make the matter worse, instead of upgrading the diploma programme after a public outcry in East Africa, Makerere worsened the situation by

- b) It was considered a para-professional programme. Until mid 1980s, the Makerere diploma was considered a professional qualification. Later, it was downgraded to a para-professional qualification. This development seriously affected its marketability in the region (Otike, 1989).
- c) The conservative attitude of the school management. Despite the concern expressed by professionals in East Africa, the school did not introduce an undergraduate degree programme until 1989 long after other LIS schools in the region had been established.
- - the school has since recovered from some of the problems mentioned and presently has programmes ranging from undergraduate to doctorate programmes.
- since then a number of LIS schools have been



## ● **b) LIS Education in Kenya.**

- - Kenya has perhaps the highest number of LIS schools in the region. Among these is:
  - i) Kenya Polytechnic University College
  - ii) Egerton University
  - iii) Kisii University College
  - iv) Laikipia University College
  - vi) Kenyatta University
  - vii) Moi University
- - among private universities, Kenya has the following schools:
  - i) Inorero University
  - ii) Kenya Methodist University
  - iii) Mount Kenya University

## ● **LIS education in Tanzania.**

- - Tanzania has the least number of library schools
- - Tanzania has tended to rely to some extent on LIS schools in her immediate neighbourhood to supplement what she has. Among the schools are:
  - a) University of Dar-es- Salaam. Dept. of Information Studies. The department carries out both master's and doctorate programmes in LIS
  - b) Tumaini University, Dar-es-Salaam. This is a private university. It is the only institution providing undergraduate programmes in the country.
  - c) Tanzania Library Service LIS Programme at



- **Change from Library to LIS schools:**

- - as stated elsewhere, library schools have had to review their programmes to include other related programmes such as Archives and Records Management, IT, publishing, knowledge management, etc. Among schools that have pioneered in this direction include Moi University School of Information Sciences, EASLIS, etc.

- **Reasons:**

- a) to keep abreast of changes taking place in the information field. Most schools offering LIS education used to be known as schools of librarianship, or simply, library schools. This name used to be very restrictive. The revision of the name to incorporate library and information studies or library and information science allows other disciplines to be brought on board such as archives and records management as the case of Botswana. EASLIS at Makerere has brought on board the third discipline, publishing. Previously, it

- b) To remain competitive. This has been brought about by the increasing number of schools. A number of LIS schools are coming up with more modern descriptions such as schools of information management, information science, department of knowledge management, etc. These descriptions appear to appeal to the youth. In Kenya, for instance, two new schools have come up with these names and are attracting a number of students: Schools of Information and Knowledge Management at Kisii University College; and Kabianga University College.
- c) Dislike for librarian. Many young librarians do not like the term, "librarian." To them librarian is a term closely associated with shelving, stamping and issuing out of books. They argue that the kind of work they do does not justify this description. They are more comfortable with new terms such as information manager, information specialist, documentalists, knowledge manager, etc.



## ● **Current trends in LIS education**

- - LIS programmes have become more sophisticated in line with market demand. New concepts have been incorporated in the LIS curricula. They include:
- i) ICT. Libraries are demanding for graduates who are IT compliant in line with the concept of libraries without walls. The paperless society is knocking at our door!
- ii) emphasis on multi-media. The print media is no longer a centre of attraction.
- iii) concept of knowledge management. LIS education is being extended to include knowledge management. However, there is need to investigate this issue to ascertain the present and future demand for graduates of knowledge management.
- iv) There is now a growing need for distance education in LIS. We must complement the effort of UNISA by incorporating the programme in our

## ● **THE FUTURE**

- The future of LIS education will greatly depend on many factors:
- a) changes taking place in the information field. This will be influenced by new concepts and innovations.
- b) changes in technology
- c) support for the information profession. This will greatly depend on the perception of policy makers towards information and for that matter, the information or library profession.
- d) the attitude of the youth towards the library profession. How the youth will perceive the library profession. Will they continue to love the library profession or they will ditch it?
- d) the future will also depend on how the library or information profession is marketed.
- - Do we market our profession?



- - Are we happy to be librarians?
- - Did we receive a call into the profession the way nurses or nuns receive?
- - Did we take up the profession simply because we missed out on the preferred choices?
- If all responses to the above questions are positive, then we can happily say, the future for LIS profession and for that matter, LIS education is bright



- **THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR ATTENTION**