

ATTRACTING STUDENTS INTO LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAMMES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

By

Prof. Zakari Mohammed
FNLA, FNIM
Department of Library and Information Science
Ahmadu Bello University
Zaria, Nigeria
Email: zakmoh2000@yahoo.com

Meeting: **123. Education and Training**
Simultaneous Interpretation: English, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Russian and Spanish

WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 74TH IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL
10-14 August 2008, Quebec, Canada
http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/index.htm

Abstract

The developing countries are caught up in-between the paradigm of development and coping with the dictates of developed societies which they have to catch up with in order to fit into the contemporary World of the 21st century and perhaps beyond. The information professionals and indeed the LIS schools in the developing societies suffer the same rate. This is even more pertinent that they have to compete vigorously among other fields of study in attracting quality candidates into their respective programmes at all levels so as to produce graduates capable of coping with the challenges of lCT applications, access and usage to meet the information needs of all the segments of the society. These challenges have necessitated the need for continued review of LIS curriculum at all levels and the introduction of new programmes in the LIS schools in the developing countries such as Nigeria with the view to attracting quality students irrespective of their backgrounds so as to produce professionals that could launch the country into the contemporary information world while at the same time consolidating their gains and taking care of their inadequacies. Within this context, the paper examines LIS schools and programmes in the developing societies yesterday, today and tomorrow using Nigerian experience as well as strategic management and marketing options to attract quality students into the LIS programmes where there is cut throat competition from other fields of study to attract qualitative candidates that could met the

yearnings of the country on graduation and who could also cope with the challenges of the time.

Introduction

The advances in the sciences and in the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly the Internet, intranet and other network technologies have continued to impact positively on the methodologies of library and information service delivery, education and training of information service providers as well as the information needs and seeking behaviours of the information seekers and users. This leads to a shift of paradigm of the library and information profession, education, training and services from the traditional (closed) model of librarianship to the contemporary (open) model of librarianship characterized by client-oriented (user-centred) professionalism and services where library and information services, education, training, skills and clientele are dynamically interwoven with the changing needs of the environment and the society at large. It is generally observed that in modern economy, the importance of information has continued to increase and it calls for better use of existing services and continuous improvement of information services to meet explicit and implicit needs of the society. Education and training in library and information science, as a matter of policy must therefore take cognizance of the complexities in the contemporary public and private organizations and institutions as direct response to their changing information needs. Library and information professionals are needed not only to gather, organize and coordinate access and use of the best and rich available information resources of organizations and the society, but also to package, repackage and market them to ensure their effective access and utilization by the target audience.

The contemporary model of library and information systems and services and by extension the profession, education and training is being propelled today by the dynamics of:

a) Media technology which has affected the contents of libraries to include both print and electronic media. This has led to the transformation of libraries into media centres, information resource centres in private and public institutions, learning resources centres or library common in academic institutions, and

instructional resources centres in schools. Analog and digital (cabled) television systems and services are now common features of modern libraries.

b) Computer technology which has facilitated the automation of library and information systems, operations, and services and digitization of its collections/resources for easy access and use, especially in real-time regime using network technologies, without limitation to time and space. Simply put, the computer technology has removed library and information systems, operations and services from manual and mechanical regimes to electronic/automated regime where time and space are not issues of concern. We now have digital/virtual libraries. This has some consequences on the education, training and research in library and information service.

c) Community participation whereby the library clientele or rather the community it serves has a say in the way it is managed and utilized. This gave credence to the emergency of library committee/board comprised of representatives of the library proprietor/management and patrons vested with the responsibility of controlling and managing the affairs of the library.

d) Adherence to social responsibility whereby the library provides non-library based services to its community. Such services usually centre on the provision of social welfare services in form of serving as social centre, meeting centre, community centre, etc.

The foregoing forces of change suggest that librarianship, library systems, operation, services, as well as library education and training must be constantly transformed to cope with the dynamics of the 21st century model of librarianship and professionalism conceived to be open, user-centred, dynamic and receptive to constant change for the good of the server and the served. Thus, libraries, information centres and the Library and Information Science (LIS) schools must devise viable means of attracting the best staff and students, as the case may be, so as to get the best cream of professionals that will ensure the survival and advancement of the 21st century contemporary model of librarianship, library and information systems and services, as well as education and training.

Libraries, Librarianship and Library and Information Education and Training in Developing Countries

Libraries and information centres as well as the LIS schools in the developing countries are at cross-roads in their bid to employ the open system model of professionalism, librarianship, library and information science education and training when their full grip of the classical model is not assured.

The developing economies, particularly the Africans, have and are still overwhelmed by rural settlers, village dwellers engaged in traditional methods of farming, fishing, animal husbandry and other orthodox economic activities and health care services delivery. These have led to a degrading socio-economic status, rural-urban drift/migrations, preponderance of unlettered inhabitants especially in secular education, poor health conditions and unsafe environments. Added to these calamities are lack of good governance, nose diving national economy, unstable and undemocratic polity and insecurity.

The dilemma of librarians and library and information services in the developing societies especially in the African sub-regions is still hinged on the traditional concept of library and information service that is printed format dependent rather than also on non-printed format outputs. Thus, LIS education and training in such societies must take cognizance of the prevailing societal milieu characterized by high rate of illiteracy particularly in secular education; strong oral tradition of communication, as well as storage of information and delivery; a growing reading culture, writing and publishing; government apathy to health care delivery, education and information industry; availability of multiplicity of languages traditions and religious; and near absence of or an eroding established literary tradition.

In order to succeed, librarians in developing economies need to have a clear understanding of how and the extent to which an individual or group of individuals or societies generate, acquire, distribute, communicate and utilize information regardless of

its nature, package, quality, content and significance. Hence the need for continued review of the curriculum of the LIS schools in developing countries and the redefinition of library and information profession for professional identity and relevance of information work and workers in developing countries (Zakari, 1998).

To a large extent, it could be said that the emergence and subsequent development of LIS schools in African sub-regions owes a lot to the efforts of UNESCO when in 1953, it organized a seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa at the University College, Ibadan, Nigeria. The seminar recommended among other things the establishment of an institution for the training of library personnel in Africa (UNESCO, 1954). Hitherto, a majority of the librarians manning the libraries in the regions were expatriates. The few privileged Africans who received training in librarianship were sent abroad to take courses leading to the award of the British/American Library Association qualifications.

In the Nigeria scene, the need for the training of library staff gave credence to the survey report of Ethel Fegan submitted to the British Colonial Office in 1941 (Nnaji, 1986). The first training organized for West African Library staff took place in Achimota College, Ghana training centre. The second training centre came up at the University College of Ibadan where John Harris and John Parks organized a training course in 1950.

The establishment of the first LIS school in Nigeria in 1959 at the University of Ibadan (UI) was a by-product of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's concern for library development in British West Africa when in 1957, it sent Professor Harold Lancour of Pittsburgh University to study the library needs of the region. The report recommended among other things the establishment of the Institute of Librarianship (now Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies) for training librarians leading to the award of Diploma in Librarianship Certificate at graduate level.

The establishment of the Ibadan LIS school did not go smoothly without heated debate for and against it especially amongst the European experts. Those in opposition

wondered whether a West African Library School would be capable of providing the required training and experiences as that of a United Kingdom (UK) library school. Hence, the adoption of the British ALA syllabus at the first instance before it was reviewed in later years. This debate could be said to be the beginning of the fallacies of education and training of library staff in the region.

The Robert Ashby's report on the training of staff in the libraries in Nigeria (Ashby, 1964) conducted under the auspices of West Africa Library Association (WALA) in 1962; brought with it another dimension of confusion in the education and training of library personnel. He recommended for the establishment of a training unit (Board) under the supervision of the National Director of Library Training to conduct in-service training or short courses at a central point.

The 1963 F.A. Sharr's report on library needs in Northern Nigeria (Sharr, 1963) gave birth to the establishment of the second LIS school in Nigeria in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria in 1965 to educate and train librarians at the undergraduate level as opposed to that of Ibadan's postgraduate Diploma programme. The ABU programme leads to the award of professional certificate in librarianship, Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) now Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS). It also mounted a para-professional programme in Librarianship, Diploma in Library Science (DLS) now Diploma in Library and Information Science (DLIS). The differences in the philosophy, aims, objectives and content of the two programmes led to heated debate for and against among the indigenous librarians trained abroad and in Ibadan LIS school. The debate for and against the two programmes (graduate vs. postgraduate diploma programmes) as the entry point of professional qualification for librarians in the country further added another confusion in the philosophy and curriculum of education and training of library professionals in the country. Unfortunately, the Ibadan programme lost out for Zaria's which is now being adopted nationwide.

Between 1977 and 1990, additional LIS schools were established at Bayero University, Kano (1977), University of Maiduguri (1978), University of Nigeria, Nsukka (1983), Imo

State University (now Abia State University), Uturu (1984), Delta State University, Ekpoma (1990) and Federal University of Technology, Minna (2002). By the first quarter of 2008, there were 22 LIS schools established in the Federal, State and Private Universities in Nigeria each at different stages of development. What is however constant among them is the undergraduate programme patterned along that of ABU Zaria. Some of the universities offering LIS programmes also offer some postgraduate programmes at Masters and Doctoral Levels.

On the other hand, several Federal and State Polytechnics and Colleges of Education offer para-professional programmes leading to the award of Diploma, Higher Diploma and National Certificate of Education Certificates as the case may be. These programmes have introduced another dimension to the philosophy and curriculum of education and training of library, personnel in Nigeria. This is even more critical in their placement in the labour market, advancement in higher education and comparison of their weighting with the University-based Diploma programmes.

Attraction of High Quality Candidates/Students for LIS Programmes in Nigeria

A critical analysis of the developments of LIS schools in Nigeria vis-à-vis the overall objectives of providing opportunities for manpower development of library and information personnel in the country, it could be said that prospective candidates for admission into the Nigeria LIS schools have places of choice to go for their professional education and training. However, their final decision on which LIS school they would prefer to attend will hinge on the type of programme available, the admission requirements for the available programme, their overall interest in the respective programmes, the job opportunities associated with the programmes and the extent to which their academic credentials actually met the admission requirements for the desired programme.

Although the regulating bodies of tertiary institutions in Nigeria such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the Joint Admissions

and Matriculation Board (JAMB) have set up minimum admission requirements, for the approved programmes in such institutions, there could be some internal variations acceptable to the respective institutions in order to satisfy the philosophy establishing the programmes of study. What is however crucial is the ability of the programmes to attract high quality candidates for admission and the ability of their products to acquire the necessary education, training, skills and other competencies expected of them by the employers of labour. The basic question therefore is: how can the LIS schools in Nigeria and indeed in other developing countries attract high quality candidates for admission into their respective programmes?

LIS schools in Nigeria and indeed in other developing countries are today situated in cut-throat competitive environments characterized by internal and external challenges which they must cope with in order to survive, advance and become more relevant in the scheme of things. The extent to which they are willing and able to overcome these challenges will go a long way in determining the extent to which they can attract quality candidates for admission into their programmes.

Internal Challenges:

a) Philosophy and Type of Programme

It is important that all programmes offered in LIS schools are based on clearly define philosophy, goals and objectives. This helps to determine the type of candidates to be admitted and for which type of programme. On the other hand, it assists the prospective candidates to determine which LIS schools they would prefer to attend and which type of programme they would prefer to apply for.

An analysis of the type of professional programmes offered in the Nigeria LIS schools shows that professional programmes are offered at the non-graduate, graduate and postgraduate levels with some levels of variations according to the philosophy establishing them and the target audience. Essentially, the non-graduate Diploma programmes in either Library Science (DLS) or in Library and Information Science (DLIS) are aimed at educating and training para-professional library personnel.

The graduate programmes in Library Science (BLS) or in Library and Information Science (BLIS) are aimed at educating and training library personnel at professional level. The bachelor's degree certificate is the minimum required of a librarian to be considered as a professional and also as an academic librarian in University, Polytechnic and College of Education settings. The postgraduate programmes at the Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and Ph.D levels are advanced professional education and training for library and information professionals wishing to advance further in their respective areas of specialization and working careers. With a Masters' degree certificate, one can head a Polytechnic and College of Education Library while a Ph.D certificate is required to head a University Library.

In effect, therefore, one's life ambitions/aspirations becomes critical and relevant in the choice of which type of programme to apply for and attend. Similarly, the type of sponsorship/scholarship one obtains to attend a programme is dictated by the type. The following are the graduate and postgraduate professional programmes available in the Nigerian LIS schools:

- Bachelor of Library Science (BLS)
- Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Information Management (PGDIM)
- Masters of Library Science (MLS)
- Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS)
- M.Sc Library and Information Science
- Master of Archives and Records Management
- Master of Publishing Studies
- Master of Communication Studies
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) with specialization in Library Science, Information Science, Archives and Records Management, Publishing Studies, and Communication Studies.

b) Admission Requirements and Curriculum of Study

Although there is a general minimum admission requirement for each accredited programme approved by the government agency responsible for University education in Nigeria (NUC), there are same variations in the overall admission requirements approved by the respective University Senate.

In Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for example, any candidate admissible for any type of programme in the University must have had at least 5 O' Level credits in General Certificate Examination (GCE), or West African Examination Council (WAEC), or National Examination Council (NECO), or a combination of any of the two certificates. However, one of the 5 credits must be in English Language. In the case of LIS programmes, the candidates must, have in addition to a credit in English Language, at least a Pass in Mathematics. While candidates for Postgraduate Diploma in Information Management must possess graduate certificate or Higher National Diploma Certificate irrespective of their fields of study, those for Masters or M.Sc. degree programmes must possess bachelors degree certificate preferably in Library and Information Science with a minimum grade of Second Class Lower Division. However, in the case of Ph.D programmes, the candidates must possess the relevant Masters degree certificate with a minimum of 'B' grade.

It is obvious that the type of programme of study must be dictated by the content of the curriculum. Hence, the observed variations in the curriculum content of the various programmes offered in the Nigeria LIS schools. While those patterned along the traditional philosophy of library science have very minimum courses in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the Information Science based programmes have half (1/2) to two third (2/3) of their curriculum contents ICT based. The ICT inclined Library and Information Science based programmes are geared towards preparing contemporary library and information professionals that can use effectively the ICTs in providing value-added information very much needed to cope with the challenges of the emerging digital age and the competitive global socio-economic, political and cultural environments.

Some of the courses offered in such programmes include:

- Information Systems Analysis, Design, Development and Evaluation
- Information Systems and Resources Management
- Data Processing and Communication
- Software Development and Packages
- Telecommunication Systems and Services
- Computer Applications
- Network and Networking
- Multimedia Technologies
- Data bases and on-line systems and services
- Management Information Systems and Services
- Management Sciences and Marketing
- Information Policy and Policy Implementation

  Knowledge Management, etc.

However, the extent of the coverage of the content of each course unit is a function of the type and level of the programme in focus. Karisiddappa (2004) remarks that 'there can be no two opinions about the fact that the demand for information professionals will continue to exist and even grow. What matters is the knowledge and skills expected of them'. Thus, the final decision of a candidate on which LIS programme to apply for and attend is will also be dictated by his/her academic background, competence and aspirations.

(c) Faculty/Staff

The quality and quantity of teaching staff have direct bearing on the quality of teaching and research and invariably on the quality of the products churned out into the labour market. By extension, the type and quality of an LIS school's product has some significant effect on the extent of the acceptability of the programme and its products in the labour market; and consequently on the decision of preference of the prospective candidates wishing to apply for admission into the LIS programme.

An assessment of the quality of the faculty members/staff in the LIS schools in Nigeria shows some deficiencies especially in the areas of ICT based courses enshrined in the information science based programmes. This deficiency is however being taken care of in ABU Zaria for example, through collaborative teaching and research with other faculty members especially in the Departments of Mathematics/Computer Science, Business Administration, Mass Communication and the University's Computer Centre. Other options taken include deliberate recruitment of faculty with background in computer science and management sciences; encouragement of the faculty to attend workshops and enroll in relevant short-time courses and in-service programmes; and encouragement of the students to take relevant cognate courses in other departments especially in the Computer Science, Mass Communication, Sociology, Economics, Political Science and International Relations departments.

(d) Teaching, Research and Learning Facilities/Resources

There is no doubt that the library and information professionals need to be practical in orientation and actions. Hence, the need for relevant laboratories in LIS schools. A typical LIS school of the contemporary information age must have in addition to a departmental library, which should serve as its workshop/laboratory, a computer laboratory and a multi-media laboratory fully equipped with the state-of-the-art ICT equipments/ facilities and Internet connectivity. These are needed for hands-on training of the students so that they can fit better in this competitive global labour market. Their availability create the difference between theoretical and practical teaching and learning. Library and information professionals require both knowledge to survive, prosper in the profession and also make a difference in the labour market.

However, an assessment of the teaching and research facilities in the LIS schools in Nigeria shows that less than half of the schools have the requisite ICTs/multi-media technologies laboratories including departmental library for teaching, research and learning. They rely more on their respective university libraries to perform their practical lessons. In ABU, Zaria LIS school for instance, in addition to the departmental library

and class rooms/seminar rooms for undergraduate and postgraduate students; there are two ICT laboratories for these groups of students.

Teaching, research and learning resources could constitute factors to be considered by prospective candidates wishing to apply for admission into LIS school programmes especially at postgraduate levels where areas of specialization are well defined. Our experience in ABU Zaria LIS school revealed that the quality and type of candidates struggling to enroll into our graduate and postgraduate programmes have continued to increase dramatically within the last 10 years when we established our ICT/multi-media laboratories and progressively improving on their facilities. While there is preponderance of graduate students from other departments registering for cognate courses in the department, there is an upsurge of graduate students with background in other subject fields pursuing postgraduate programmes in the department.

(e) Other Programmes in the University

By and large, all programmes offered in the University are expected to compete favourably among themselves in attracting prospective quality candidates wishing to pursue their respective programmes. This is evident due to the fact that their respective fields of study/discipline have some basic entry requirements. For example, a science-based student who possesses the basic academic credentials could be admitted into any of the science-based programme while same applies to the Social Sciences and Humanities based programmes. Hence, the background for the competition in attracting prospective quality candidates for admission into the respective programmes in a university.

Although it could be argued that a prospective candidate's preference for a programme can influence his/her choice of programme of study and in which institution to attend, the packaging and repackaging of such a programme could further affect a candidate's final decision and preference for a programme especially when it is properly promoted showing the variety of opportunities awaiting its product at the labour market and examples of its products who have made it successfully in life within and outside the country after graduation.

(f) Marketing of LIS Programmes

Like any other product, LIS programmes and indeed other educational programmes should be seen as unique products requiring advertisement. Through the application of the appropriate marketing mix, LIS programmes can be advertised to create public awareness on their availability and viability; the philosophy, goals and objectives of the programmes, the curriculum content and course structure; admission and graduation requirements; the faculty and the teaching, learning and research facilities/resources available; and the products' competence and opportunities in the labour market. The marketing strategies adopted by LIS schools, especially when properly packaged and repackaged, would serve as one of the most veritable tool for the attraction of high quality candidates for admission into the respective programmes.

The major challenges the marketing of LIS programmes in Nigeria and perhaps in other developing countries will have to contain with are:

- how to continue to attract significant number of quality candidates from with and outside the country for admission into their respective programmes;
- how to sustain the acceptability and credibility of their programmes in the outside world;
- how to maintain contact with their products for feed back on their work performances which should serve as basis for reviewing the programmes periodically; and
- how to maintain a niche over other LIS programmes offered elsewhere.

Like commercial enterprises, LIS schools would have to employ the use of print and electronic media including Internet and other on-line network systems and services to market their programmes and products. The LIS schools need to establish a creative marketing committee with representation from the students, faculty members, graduates and friends of the school. The committee should be vested with the responsibilities of packaging and repackaging of the programmes for advertisement to the general public via print and electronic media, exhibition and other forms of promotional channels including talk shows.

2. External Challenges

These are obvious challenges LIS schools and indeed other programmes of study have to overcome in order to attract quality candidates for admission. These include:

(a) Employer expectations and Professional Competence

It is generally expected that programmes offered in LIS schools and in any other departments of an educational institution should prepare the products to be competent enough to cope with the expectations of prospective employers of labour and also be self reliant when the need arises. Some of the competencies expected of a library and information professional in the information/digital age include:

- expertise in knowledge management;
- mastery of ICT/multi-media applications in data/information management, transfer and delivery;
- good knowledge of management theories and practices;
- information brokerage, and advocacy; etc

These professional competencies point to the need for LIS schools to continually review their LIS curriculum to fit the contemporary age expectations. This should be in addition to the upgrading of their teaching, learning and research resources/facilities to enhance the theoretical and practical competence of their products.

It is natural that employers of labour would prefer to hire individuals who would add value to their organizations. This expectation is even more pertinent for the library and information professionals in this digital era where ICTs have come to bear in all facets of library and information work as organizations are gradually becoming knowledge based so as to maintain a niche over others in the global economy. Certainly, preference will be given to the library and information professionals who have the knowledge, skills and experience in information management, information resources management; information delivery for enhanced creativity and innovations, expertise in the exploration and exploitation of ICTs potentials and who are indeed professionals in the practical sense of it.

In Nigeria, holders of bachelors degree in any subject field with third class or pass grade are rarely employed in Federal Government establishments. Where there is no option, they are usually stepped down by one level in their employment cadre. There is now an upsurge of applications for admission into postgraduate programmes in the Universities in Nigeria. This has been necessitated by an increasing rate of unemployment, employers' lack of confidence in the ability and competence of an appreciable number of graduates and the introduction of terminal point of advancement in work places by type of academic/professional qualifications.

This scenario points to the fact that it is those products or professionals with practical knowledge, skills, experiences and competence, who would be most preferred by the employers of labour. In effect therefore, prospective candidates applying for admission into university programmes and indeed into other educational institutions would prefer to apply for admission into reputable and recognized institutions and programmes where they would acquire the requisite competences necessary to ensure better prospect for employment and advancement.

(b) Monitoring and Evaluation (Accreditation) Bodies

The practice world wide is to have government agencies and professional bodies responsible for monitoring and evaluating professional and non-professional academic programmes (as the case may be) and according to define criteria for their accreditation. The public acceptability or otherwise of such programmes will largely be a function of the accreditation status the programmes have earned from such bodies. In Nigeria, the body responsible for monitoring and evaluating all university programmes is the NUC who periodically sends teams of experts to assess the curriculum as well as the teaching, learning and research facilities of the programmes including their staff positions and student's competence.

The professional body responsible for accrediting LIS programmes in Nigeria is the Libraries Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). In order to harmonize and ensure quality of the LIS school programmes in the country, a body of lecturers in the LIS schools established the Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science

Educators (NALISE) in 1984 at its first meeting/conference held at Bayero University, Kano with the view to create a forum for promoting and exchanging ideas and knowledge. It organizes and publishes the proceedings of its bi-annual conference aimed at highlighting the state of LIS education in Nigeria and the role the LIS schools could play in the development of library and information education and training, the profession and services. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) is also supposed to serve as a body for promoting and harmonising the professional practices and on advisory body for enhancing LIS programmes in Nigeria. It has about 12 committees responsible for the various professional activities/functions of the profession. It organizes seminars, workshops, and an annual conference and general meeting for its members. Also, it publishes its journals and newsletters for the consumption of its members and the general public. However, the extent to which the NLA, LRCN and NALISE have succeeded in their mandates will require a research into their activities.

There is no doubt that programmes that obtained full accreditation status from established government agency and professional bodies will attract more quality candidates for admission into such programmes. This will also enhance its acceptability and reputation in the public eyes. However, the reverse could be the case when interim or denial status is obtained. As the results of accreditation exercises are normally published in the national dailies and in the special bulletin of the accrediting bodies, it is presupposed that no programme has a hiding place from the general public. In essence, it could be said that the type of accreditation status a programme obtains will have direct effect on the extent to which it will be able to attract high quality candidates for admission from the pool of applicants.

(c) Other LIS Schools

The popularity of LIS programmes in Nigeria is on the increase in recent times. This might not be unconnected with the application of ICTs in Library and Information work and opportunities for the products to get employed in work places other than in libraries. Between 1959 and 1990, there were only seven (7) LIS schools in Nigerian universities. This has risen to 22 by the first quarter of 2008. This rapid increase in the

LIS schools in the country has certainly called for stiff competition amongst themselves in attracting the best candidates for admission into their respective programmes.

Another dimension to the competition is the prospect of obtaining admission into LIS schools abroad. The opportunities to attend academic programmes abroad are on the decline due to non readily available opportunities for scholarships/sponsorships and the declining economic status of the average families. Where such scholarships/sponsorships are available, there is high and stiff competition in securing them. The option left for a majority of the prospective candidates is to fall back to the indigenous LIS schools. Hence, competition amongst the LIS schools continues.

Apparently, it appears that cut-throat competition amongst the LIS schools in Nigeria to attract high quality candidates for admission into their programmes has come to stay. Some LIS schools have taken to admitting quality products of their lower programmes for admission into the higher ones. Thus, the extent to which each would succeed against the other may largely be a function of the quality of the programme, the accreditation status of the programme, the reputation of the university and department; the marketing strategies employed to advertise the programme; and the quality of the products churned out into the labour market to compete with others from other institutions of learning within and outside the country.

Conclusion

There is no doubt in the fact that the existence, survival, advancement and reputation of LIS schools in developing countries as well as in the developed ones largely lies in their ability to attract high quality candidates for admission into their programmes. What is therefore required of them is the capacity and ability to cope with the internal and external challenges that tend to greatly influence the prospective candidates' final decision and preference for the choice of programme of study and LIS school to attend.

References

Ashby, R. (1964) Education and Training of Library Personnel in Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries* 1(2).

Karisiddappa C.R. (2004). Library and Information Science Curriculum for the Developing Countries. *A paper presented at IFLA General Conference and Council,* p.4.

Mohammed, Zakari (1998), Redefinition of Information Profession and Professional Identity and Relevance in Developing Countries. *In Issues in the Information Profession: Nigerian Perspectives* edited by Tijjani A., Mohammed, Z and Otim J. Abuja: NLN, pp 35 – 39.

Nnaji, L.O. (1986). *The Library in Nigeria.* Enugu: Fourth Dimension, p.68.

Sharr, F.A. (1963). *The Library Needs of Northern Nigerian.* Kaduna; Ministry of Education.

UNESCO (1954) *Development of Public Libraries in Africa*. The Ibadan Senior Paris; UNESCO.