LIBRARY EDUCATION IN THE NEW MILLENIUM

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ABSTRACT

[2] Library education has undergone major changes over the years. For example, basic entry requirements into graduate professional library schools have shifted from a mere (high school) diploma to a first degree. These changes are driven by the need to enhance the quality of library education programmes, teaching methodologies, teaching staff and students admitted into these programmes. This paper discusses the challenges facing library education and training at graduate level. The paper argues that in the twenty first century library education will have to respond not only to technological challenges but also to current job-market demands and needs. In view of this what is taught must be relevant and must reflect existing situations and job-market demands. Regular curriculum review, assessment and evaluation are viewed as crucial in improving the quality of library education and therefore must be an integral part of it.

INTRODUCTION

Librarianship is interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary and includes engineering, science and social science disciplines, information systems and information policy. It also includes techniques and practices borrowed from a variety of sources, for example, chemistry in paper and film conservation work. The discipline also includes theoretical studies of information organization and retrieval, information systems design, artificial intelligence, expert systems, and computer hardware and software and communication systems (Apostle and Raymond, 1997). The discipline is broad with overlapping interests.

LIBRARY EDUCATION: DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Library education has undergone fundamental changes in the last hundred years. This is in terms of the quality and structure of programmes, curriculum on content and focus, teaching methods, who can teach and who can be admitted. For example, entry requirements into professional library education programmes

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have shifted from a mere high school diploma to a first degree. The current developments in Library education were also greatly influenced by distinguished American scholars and professionals including Melvin Dewey, who founded the New York Library school in 1887, and Katherine Lucinda Sharp, who established the Armor Library Institute in 1887. These early pioneers were not only professionals but also distinguished scholars who brought to the profession a distinct scholarly attitude.

In North America, for example, the first formal library education programme was founded in 1887 at Columbia University by Melvin Dewey. Library education was taught at technical institutes such as Pratt, Drexel, and Armor, and in public libraries in Los Angeles, Denver, Cleveland, and at Syracuse, Maine and Chicago Universities. By 1902 there were only six Library schools in the United States. By 1932 the number had increased to fifteen. From the beginning, scholars in the discipline were concerned with the quality of library education programmes with the view of improving them. It was for this reason also that the American Library Association (ALA) was created in 1908. The establishment of the American Library Association Training Board followed this. These organs' key responsibilities were to promote standards for training, regulation of the curriculum and content and accreditation. They were also responsible for promoting quality library education programmes at various levels, particularly University level.

However, radical changes in library education can be traced back to 1928, with the introduction of doctoral programmes at Chicago, a move followed by Illinois, Michigan, Columbia, Berkeley and Western Reserve Universities in the 1960's. By the mid-fifties, twenty-seven library schools were already offering a Masters programme. This was attributed to the increased demand for trained professional librarians in the country. By 1923, following the recommendations of the Williams Report, the status of library education, like that of professional schools, was elevated when library education began to be taught within established University departments. With this new development with its emphasis on entry requirements, the focus shifted from the teaching of techniques of the profession to theory, critical thinking, logic and reasoning, creativity and innovation. The ultimate goal was to train intellectually competent professionals who could meet diverse and sectoral information needs of clients (Lynch, 1988).

What Should be Taught?
Views on what should be taught as a core curriculum and options in library education graduate programmes vary. Generally, the predominant view is that both theory and practical skills should be taught. Wambungu (1984) and others stress that teaching should concentrate on theory because practical skills can be imparted on the job and through field attachments. Others, including Powell and Greth, (1986) argue that too much theory does not prepare students for immediate absorption into the job market. Therefore, emphasis should focus on

operational needs and processes such as communication skills. While theory is important, harmony between theory and practice is just as important. Both are necessary for ensuring that students understand the underlying principles and ethics of the profession as well as its underlying philosophy. According to Hayes (1988) what is taught must not only be relevant but must also "meet the needs of a wide range of employers and operational contexts." Therefore, the structure and content of core and optional courses must be designed to address these needs and requirements.

Core Curriculum

The importance of the Core Corriculum has long been recognized. Hayes (1988:50), for example, states that:

> In an education programme, a core is the means by which its goals and objectives are met. It serves as the objective statement of results to be expected and actually, it serves as the "contract" between the student and the program; between the professional and the school.

Core courses are part of the total required curriculum, which must be studied by everyone at either undergraduate or graduate level regardless of one's specialization. An important function of a Core is to prepare students academically, intellectually and professionally. Thus, a Core is not only a tool for grounding students in academic and professional theories but it is also the reference point for inculcating philosophical ideas, critical, analytical and assessment skills, initiative, intellectual development, and professional attitudes. Moreover, subject composition of a core and its underlying principles are the means for providing intellectual and professional direction. Knowledge and skills, which can be generalized and applied in different work situations is considered crucial (Asheim, 1968, Shera, 1972, Whitehead 1929 and Kerr, 1972). Therefore, a Core course must reflect the social structure, societal norms, values and goals of parent institutions.

Different needs and specializations of students influence the design and content of Core and optional courses. At undergraduate level emphasis is on diverse liberal education and teaching the truth for its own sake. A broad-based Core curriculum and options are the means for developing students academically and intellectually and ensuring that students develop sound individual judgement and well thought out ideas so that they can cope wisely and concretely with everyday issues in a more well-grounded manner (Newman, 1959, and Rosovsky, 1990).

In Library education a Core is two-dimensional and is provided at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Core courses are the foundation for intellectual and professional development and also for theoretical and practical grounding. In the final analysis the objective is to train and produce academically

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competent and knowledgeable professionals, who are not only skilled but also committed and understand the underlying professional philosophy, principles and ethics of the profession. Taken in this context, library education core courses are the means by which library education objectives and goals can be achieved and improved.

Even though the schools themselves usually determine what should constitute courses, according to Asheim (*op.cit*), philosophical grounding should constitute 4/5 of Core courses and 1/5 of the Core should constitute professional and practical training. He further stresses that core courses should include the following: Study of the library in relation to social relations, characteristics of the profession, interpretation, appreciation, evaluation, selection and use of books; organisations and their characteristics (internal and external) in relation to services and users; and library management principles, Communication skills as well as Research.

Generally what is taught in most graduate library education programmes as core courses include organization of information (cataloguing and classification), information retrieval, (reference), selection, management and orientation to the profession, research skills and personnel and human interpersonal relations. Currently most core courses include IT courses.

Electives/Options

Optional courses or electives are also an important component of the library education curriculum. When students choose what courses to take, individual interests, aspirations, ambitions and specializations often guide them. Multidisciplinary optional courses are important in any education programme because they allow students to pursue a wide variety of interests and specializations.

Furthermore, Core and optional courses are the basis for understanding not only user- information needs and user-information-seeking behaviour but also information use. In this respect, what is taught in graduate library education programmes must be structured in such a way that they enable students to adapt and apply the general underlying principles of the discipline, including ideas and skills in improving work performance and effectiveness. Furthermore, what is taught must also contribute to quality scholarship, research and teaching and also to institutional goals and objectives (White, 1986 and Gardner, 1987).

What Else Should Be Taught?

In today's technically oriented society, basic computer skills should also be offered to allow professionals to acquire skills that would allow them to manage technical change in library functions. Similarly, management courses should be offered in order to allow would be professionals to understand and apply management principles in library functions. Furthermore, managerial skills are crucial and would allow professionals to cope effectively with managerial

challenges in the workplace. Courses in basic statistics should also be taught because statistical information plays a major part in decision-making, planning, research and data analysis.

Where Should It Be Taught?

Views differ regarding where library education should be taught. Library education, like medicine, law and business studies falls into what is commonly known as professional schools. Simply defined, professional schools and other specialised institutions are those institutions which offer degrees, ranging from bachelor to doctorate, mostly in a single specialised field. While some professional schools may be autonomous and many are, they operate within the institutional framework of parent institutions and, therefore, their goals and objectives are interrelated. Library schools fall in this category. Scholars who have studied these issues argue that University education had been founded on professional schools, such as, law and medicine, since medieval times. The good reputation of Universities during that period is also attributed to professional schools.

Views vary on whether library education should be taught in University departments or not. Moreover, library education has been widely criticised, on the grounds that too much emphasis is placed on techniques rather than theoretical grounding. Critics also argue that not only are library schools too isolated from other university departments but, in addition, professional schools in general tend to divert attention from teaching undergraduates. Furthermore, that they also deprive universities of their own reason for existence (Rosovsky, 1990 and Kerr 1972). Despite this, the fact of the matter is graduate professional library schools also make a big contribution to university education and its mission. For example, they train and produce qualified library and information professionals, experts and technologists for a wide variety of information sectors. Furthermore, through research, publications, and curriculum design, they also contribute to a body of knowledge in the discipline.

Theory Versus Practice

As indicated earlier, library education has been strongly criticized on the grounds that too much emphasis is given to practical skills instead of theoretical grounding, although teaching practical skills and techniques is just as important as teaching theory. In library education practice also allows students to relate theory to practice. Therefore practical experience should be viewed not only as a basis for teaching theory but also for ensuring commitment, and for understanding the profession's history, philosophy and its underlying principles and ethics (Hayes, 1988). Indeed, there are ample opportunities for theory development in the discipline, which can be derived from management practice, and knowledge of systems that are well understood. Moreover, theories can also be borrowed

from other disciplines. However, as Meleis (1985) points out, borrowed theories remain borrowed until they are adapted to a particular situation.

A key role of theory is to describe, prescribe and predict the occurrence of given phenomena as well as theory guiding research direction, the interpretation of research findings. For example, in library science theory is important and can be useful in solving management problems, user information needs, information access, education and training, etc. Taken in this context, theory can be a basis for understanding problems and for determining what can be done to solve such problems. Therefore in library science, or any other discipline, theory can be derived from both research and practice situations. What is even more important is the need to balance theory and practice. As indicated earlier, what is taught must also take into consideration not only the mission of parent teaching institutions but also the needs and requirements of would be employers.

Who Should Teach?
Teaching staff are the pillars of education programmes and their key role is to teach and provide intellectual and professional leadership. Therefore, teaching staff are also expected to be academically resourceful. Hence, the quality of library education programmes depends on the quality of its teaching staff and its students. In the developed countries, which have large pools of highly educated and trained personnel, those with Ph.D. credentials usually teach in graduate programmes. However, this varies from country to country depending on the country's level of development and the importance accorded to the training of its high level human resources.

Who Should Study?
Schools determine who is admitted to the profession. Basically, library schools always strive to recruit the best and brightest students with sound academic backgrounds and preparation, hence the emphasis on a first degree as a basic entry requirement to ensure that those who are admitted can cope academically and intellectually with the academic demands and requirements of the profession once they are enrolled in library education programmes. In Great Britain, for example, practical experience is also required in addition to a first degree.

Library Education Programme Initiatives and Challenges in East Africa
The critical role of information in development is gaining wide acceptance in African countries, including Tanzania. Even though librarianship as a profession is marginalised, there is an increasing demand for trained information and library professionals in the public and private sectors, including non-governmental organizations. Most African professional librarians, including Tanzanian were trained abroad, particularly in Great Britain

and later in North America and Canada. However, they are few in number because it is too expensive to train them abroad. Moreover, trends show that external funding for training African students who wish to pursue postgraduate studies abroad has been declining since the mid eighties.

As a result of this, various African countries have established library education programmes at graduate level, for example, in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Botswana, Nigeria and others. Even though these programmes have attracted a good number of students, few are admitted or enrolled due to financial constraints. For example, as shown in Table: 1 below, only a small number of applicants is enrolled in the Information Studies programme to pursue a Masters degree at the University of Dar es Salaam. In order to sustain this programme or encourage students to join, a limited number of partial scholarships is available for needy students. A few students are sponsored fully by their employers or donor agencies.

Table 1: *Graduate Student Enrolment in the Information Studies Programme*

YEAR	Number of Applicants	Actual Enrolled
1997/98	5	2
1998/99	27	10
1999/2000	23	6
2000/2001	31	10
Total	86	28

Source: *University of Dar es Salaam Information Studies Programme Files*

A major challenge is the extent to which this programme can be sustained without donor support. Even though the programme is only a few years old, it has attracted a good number of graduate students. Therefore concrete resource mobilization efforts and marketing strategies are needed in order to sustain the Information Studies graduate programme, as well as ensuring more graduate students are enrolled in the programme. For example, in addition to offering partial scholarships, some of the prospective candidates could be offered teaching and research assistantships. Therefore, those who head library schools must not only be competent administrators and good public relations officers but also effective fund-raisers.

In Tanzania, the Information Studies Programme was effectively established at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1997. Core courses offered included Information and Sources of Information, Information Technology and its applications, Management of Libraries, Archives and Information Centres, Research Methodology, each involving a dissertation. Options within the discipline are also offered. The Faculty of Information Studies at Moi University in Kenya, was established in 1988, initially with an undergraduate programme in information studies. Since 1993 a Master of Philosophy (*M.Phil.*) in information science has been introduced. Core courses taught included Research Methods, Information Technology, Information Resources, Systems and Services in Science and Technology including automation of libraries and information centres. Students are also required to write a thesis.

The East African School of Librarianship was established in 1963 at Makerere University. It is the oldest library school in the region. Initially, it offered courses for non-professional librarians and awarded certificates and diplomas. Currently, information studies are offered at Masters level. No information was available on Core courses offered at the time of writing this paper.

The challenge for library education programmes in Africa, particularly those in the East African region, is not only whether they can be sustained but also the extent to which they can accommodate the continuing educational needs of professional librarians who do not necessarily have a first degree. In Tanzania, the mature age entry examinations provide immense opportunities for women and men to pursue higher education at university level. Should those with professional qualifications but no university degree be encouraged to enrol in undergraduate programmes or can this requirement be waived to allow them to attain higher professional qualifications?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Challenges in Library Education
In the new millennium strategic planning in library education is crucial, so is the need for quality and relevant library education programmes. Strategic planning is also crucial in determining training needs and priorities, the level of theory and practice, specialisation options and in determining students' personal needs, job market demands and requirements as well as institutional needs. What is taught should also focus on training competent professionals and educators who can logically and effectively, conceptualise critical user information and technological needs; also professionals who can apply not only the what but also the why principle in solving library and institutional problems and in attaining desired goals, standards and procedures.

Since library education programmes tend to be smaller compared with other University programmes, they are more vulnerable and prone to closure,

particularly during times of economic hardship unless they can justify their existence. For example, in the early 1980's a large number of library schools in North America and Australia were forced to close down not only due to financial constraints but also due to poor leadership and isolation from the large campus community (Apostle and Raymond, 1997 and Lynch, 1988). Therefore, the challenge remains, does the solution and sustainability of library education programmes lie in merging with academic departments? In order to survive, the quality and relevance of library education programmes and curriculum content must be unquestionable.

In the 21st Century, there is also the need to redefine what should constitute a core curriculum, what the options should be, and the level of practical skills needed. Similarly, should multi-disciplinary courses, which cut across all kinds of information work including public and special schools and business information services, be introduced? What are the pros and cons of multidisciplinary courses? After all, those enrolled in the programmes come from different disciplinary backgrounds. Would this be the basis for strengthening subject specialisation and understanding of critical user information needs?

IT Challenges

Fast and dynamic advances in computing and communications technologies not only pose challenges but also create new job opportunities, as well as new infrastructure for education, research and international trade. Interactive multimedia technologies, integrated information systems, the Internet and the World Wide Web have also transformed the way people live, learn, work and play, including how they create and share information and exchange ideas in a wide variety of formats. Electronic publishing is also thriving, allowing librarians and information personnel to offer unprecedented information services to their clients. Today information departments are increasingly being established in university faculties and departments to teach a wide range of subjects, including: the economics of information; copyright, computer and information science, management of information systems in business and administration and many more.

In today's technologically driven society the challenge is not simply the strategic and effective uses of IT and its sustenance and the protection of intellectual property rights, but also the need to invest in a stable and well developed information and IT infrastructure. In view of this decisions concerning computerisation must be carefully thought out with consideration being given as to whether or not it will improve efficiency and access to information if and when it is needed. In this respect both manual and modern information systems may need to be preserved to ensure availability of information.

Continuing Education

Simply defined, continuing education is a basis for fulfilling individuals' identified or anticipated, unmet education and professional needs, and for updating themselves for employment through training and retraining. It should help individuals to develop leadership potential or to upgrade and expand their knowledge levels in their area of specialisation and/or in new areas. In the 21st century, continuing education programmes must go beyond identified or perceived needs at both individual and institutional level and must address job market demands and new skills requirements. Basically continuing education programmes should provide opportunities for staff to upgrade skills and knowledge levels with training to meet the demands of potential employers. Continuing education programmes can be provided through formal and informal education and on the job as well as in the form of seminars, conferences and workshops and through research and sabbatical leave.

Curriculum Review

Regular curriculum review, evaluation and assessment is crucial in ensuring the quality and relevance of library education and training, in determining how much time should be devoted to core and optional courses and also in determining key priority specialisation areas. Basically, curriculum review and assessment are tools for meeting not only the routine needs of students but also institutional needs and goals. Furthermore, curriculum review is the means for ensuring the full absorption of information professionals into the private and public sectors. Involvement of teaching staff, students and professional associations is also important in order to ensure that standards and procedures are maintained. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the extent to which the Tanzanian Library Association can influence library education and training in the 21st Century.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, technological developments have made the information workplace complex and challenging. A new wave of information professionals, with little or no library education but with computer skills, is also emerging and in demand because they have the skills and are able to satisfy a wide variety of user information needs.

In the 21st Century, information professionals are not the only ones who will be defining the role of information in society. Therefore, the structure and content of library education and the role played by librarians must change. What is taught must also reflect the changing job market needs and demands as well as professional and societal needs. In the 21st Century information professionals need more than mere functional skills but leadership, management and entrepreneurial abilities in order to manage not only the new technology but also the complex organizational and human relationships in the workplace. For librarians and information professionals, teamwork and interpersonal communication skills are vital.

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