

Full Length Research

Epistemology of Librarianship and Self-Development of Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Science Profession

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Abstract

This paper discussed the concept of entrepreneurship, librarians and self-development, librarians as entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship skills of librarians and challenges of entrepreneurship practices by librarians. Based on the established facts in the discourse, it was recommended that Government should endeavor to make policies that are favourable to small scale businesses in the country so as to encourage entrepreneurship; the library and information science schools in Nigeria should reinforce practice-based teaching and learning. They should also continue to encourage creativity using new technologies, new skills and explore new opportunities in library and information science entrepreneurship; librarians that are trained in the field of librarianship should develop the spirit and endeavour to venture into the entrepreneurship areas so as to prevent other professionals from taking foods and opportunities from our tables and librarians should equip themselves with necessary skills, attitudes and values needed for improved library services to cope with increasing entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT. It is an essential mechanism through which librarians can earn money to finance themselves on self-development programmes.

Key Words: Epistemology, Librarianship, Entrepreneurship, Self-development, Library and Information Profession

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INTRODUCTION

Epistemology is one of the branches of philosophy. It is a combination of two Greek words: *episteme* and *logos*. *Episteme* means knowledge while *logos* mean reason or study. Therefore, the combination of the two words will mean the study or logic of knowledge. Epistemology in this sense is the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with knowledge acquisition and dissemination. It tends to propose and suggest norms and principles that will

enhance acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (Bewaji, 2007). It is in this sense; epistemology is described as a normative discipline with the purpose to provide reasonable grounds for doubt and claims to knowledge. Ibrahim (2020) reiterates that epistemology “seeks to establish frameworks within which we can construct genuine and accurate understanding of the world.

Librarians are experts in the provision of information services in a systematic and defined manner that meet

the information needs of users globally, Librarians are held in high esteem in the business and management of information in all spheres of human field. Nowadays, Librarians have grown to be innovative, creative and developed mastery in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in providing library and information services to the users. Shafack (2016) affirms that librarians have proven the most suitable with skills and mandate to pull together, organize and make available and accessible information in all forms and formats to all irrespective of their social, educational and physical status. Librarians are making efforts to remain relevant in the information services business by creating and exploring various avenues to reach out to the users. Librarians are acquiring new skills to meet up with emerging technologies, tools and concepts in the profession. According to Emezue and Nwaohiri (2013) 21st century librarian will have to be armed with competent skills that will enhance the provision of effective library services to meet client's changing information needs. Byrne (2009) revealed that the skills posses by librarians in managing and accessing information and knowledge are vital to social and economic development. According to Usuka, Ekere, Oviri and Ajibo (2019) librarians have shown readiness to compete favourably in the information service provision business. Such readiness include acquiring new skills, integrating information technologies in library house-keeping activities, engaging in continuous professional and self-development programmes, exploring entrepreneurial skills and opportunities in library and information science profession for personality growth in the profession and the society at large. Entrepreneurship is the operation and ownership of a business for self-employment purposes and for creation of job opportunities through production and marketing of goods and services.

According to Emerole (2015) entrepreneurship is a unique blend of innovation, creativity and risk taking propensity with plans to creating and sustaining the value enjoyed by the customers. Usuka, Ekere, Oviri and Ajibo (2019) see entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunities without regard to resources currently controlled. To be enterprising is to keep your eyes open and your mind active. Entrepreneurship is centered on developing new business idea, acquiring necessary skill or training, raising capital, acquiring land, creating business contacts and networks, hiring labour and production of goods and services. Librarians can as well become entrepreneurs and encourage entrepreneurship by investing in various information businesses. One who invests in an entrepreneurship venture is an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur has traditionally been described as an individual who takes risks and start something new (Babalola, 2011). When librarians invest in entrepreneurial ventures they will be able to create

alternative source of acquiring wealth rather than over-dependence of salary and earned allowances. Librarians need to grow and develop in their professional career. Through entrepreneurship, librarians can create sources of funding themselves in self-development programmes. Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) revealed that technological innovations and new ideas are borne out of information sourcing, processing and dissemination thereby empowering and creating wealth for librarians. Through entrepreneurial ventures, librarians can create alternative source of making money to sponsor themselves in self-development programmes and take care of other basic needs. Every entrepreneurial venture is geared towards job creation, innovation, production, services and profit making.

Librarians and Self-Development

Librarianship as a profession provides a variety of employment opportunities. Self-development is a step one takes or training one acquires to better himself, advances his skills and become mastery in a particular field. This could be achieved by learning new skills, participating in enlightenment programmes and doing away with bad habits. Merriam-Webster (2014) defined self-development as efforts made by someone toward self-fulfillment, either through formal study programs or on one's own. In order words, self-development is a step, a programme or a training a librarian takes to train himself in order to advance his personality capacity. Librarians engaging in self-development training improve the quality of library services provided, brighten the professional career prospects of the librarian and enhance the entire library system.

Omekwu (2009) averred that if librarians do not acquire skills, other professionals such as computer science and engineering will step into their core areas of work specialization and usurp their opportunities. Therefore, in order to develop and grow in the information service business, librarians need to enroll into self-development programmes. According to Usuka, Ekere, Oviri and Ajibo (2019), designing professional development program is a commitment to self-investment, to develop new knowledge in using an array of sophisticated resources and tools in order to remain competitive for other future opportunities. Such opportunities might be new job prospects, collaborative or solo projects, or roles that would permit continued advancement and career path excellence, by expanding skills, knowledge, experiences and networks while working.

Self-development programmes for librarians include attending and presenting papers in conferences, writing and publishing journal articles, contributing to book chapters, participating in seminars and symposia, engaging in outreach programmes, enrolling to acquire

higher degrees, enrolling to acquire ICT skills, learning to develop library software, participating in workshops, volunteer services through outreach programmes and on the job training.

Entrepreneurship Skills of a Librarian

Some professional and managerial skills required by librarians for successful entrepreneurship as highlighted in Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) are:

Information Technology Skills: This is the process of acquiring skills that are associated with networking, library automation and digitization, web based services, reprography, micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation, library management software including CDS ISIS, LIBSYS, KOHA DSPACE content development, desktop publishing, intranet, presentation, hardware/software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitates the indexing and retrieval of information and thesaurus development. Farkas emphasizes on some specific technical skills like HTML, Network administration, PHP and MYSQL, efficient use of search engines, use of blogs to provide services, web cast and search skills.

Information Literacy Skills: These have to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently and using information accurately and creatively. Also included here is the economics and marketing of information products and services, information resource management, information processing and organizing, e-mail, multimedia perspectives and video conferencing.

Managerial Skills: These are the business management skills that have to do with marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal setting, decision making, human relations and managing growth. These are essential in launching and growing a new venture.

Personal Entrepreneurial Skills: This is one of the skills which the librarians need to possess and it has to do with self-discipline or control so as to be able to take charge, manage transformation and to be a visionary leader.

Technical Skills: This form of skill acquisition has to do with the written and oral communication, interpersonal, monitoring environment, the ability to organize, and network building. These skills are necessary for successful venture and they should be given attention by students to enable them succeeding in whatever they are venturing into.

Librarian as an Entrepreneur

Librarians' knowledge of entrepreneur can play a key role in any economy, using the skills and initiative necessary to anticipate needs and bring good new ideas to market. According to Okolo and Iwighrehweta (2021), areas where librarians can function as entrepreneur include:

Information Brokerage: Librarians acquire information brokerage skills in library and information science schools. Librarians can invest and make money from information brokerage. An information broker is an individual who gathers information about individuals and organizations assembles the data to create individual profiles and sale the profiles to companies, agents or institutions that need them for various purposes. Information brokers provide their clients with information for a fee. Information brokerage involves sorting out information available on a mass scale and delivering it on personalized basis. Librarians can utilize variety of information sources (print and non-print) to provide information brokerage services. This business requires little or no capital to start. Users will find this services useful especially researchers thus will be willing to pay for it. The types of information brokerage librarians can invest in are indexing and abstracting, literature search (print and non-print), selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services (CAS), document delivery, bibliographic compilation, retrospective conversion; cataloging and classification (contract cataloguing) for private libraries, management of private libraries, book editing, literature reviews, packaging and repackaging of information, volunteerism, community information services for rural dwellers and sensitization programmes.

Book Publishing: Book Publishing can be regarded as the activity or the process of making information resources such as literature, music, software and other content available to the public for sale or for free. Traditionally, the term refers to the distribution of printed works, such as books, newspapers, and magazines. Publishing is a very lucrative business especially in the academic environment. This is why publishing is taught in library and information science schools. Librarians can start publishing business by collecting manuscripts from writers or authors especially children books or story books for publishing. Typeset manuscripts can be stored in CD ROM as soft copy or printed as hard copy. One can decide to carry out all the activities or can take one or two categories and specialize in them. Also, librarians can decide to be publisher, an editor, a reference book critic or children's books reviewer. With technological advancements, librarians can engage in e-mail publishing also known as newsletter publishing, web publishing and desktop publishing. Publishing is a special and precise

job in which one has to be skilled, knowledgeable and up-to-date if he/she is to succeed in this entrepreneurial venture.

Book Dealership or Trading: Entrepreneurial potentials exist in the area of book dealership and trading for librarians. ICT has made it possible for online publishing, online book stores, online publishers and union catalogues. With these, a librarian can at the comfort of his office build contacts with the publishers (local and international) and connect with libraries that need supplies of information resources online. A librarian can also open book shops or stores through within the tertiary institution environs.

Printing and Binding Services: Printing is a very lucrative venture that librarians can invest their financial resources and energy in. Printing has become diversified. Librarians can start with printing library bulletins, library newsletters, library posters, signage and many more. Librarians can also undertake in printing journals for research groups, books written by lecturers and students, handbooks and manuals. In the academic environment binding business is booming. Librarians can bind projects and thesis for students and other literature resources emanating from the academic institution. Binding business requires little capital and tools to start and it is not time consuming.

Computer and Internet Business Services: A large number of librarians have grown to be information and communication technology (ICT) experts. They also possess Internet surfing skills. This knowledge can be harnessed by starting computer and internet services for students' registration, online payments, typesetting and printing, blog creation, website development and sourcing of information resources for assignments, term papers, projects etc.

Library Software Dealership: Library automation has become global best practices in library and information science profession. In order to automate library services library, oriented software packages are needed. Librarians can become entrepreneurs by dealing on library software and installation. Software packages are important for library in-house operations. A librarian can become a middle man between the software developers and various libraries that want to upgrade to automated services.

Supply of Library Facilities and Equipment: Librarians are in the best position to know the best and state of the art facilities and equipment for modern libraries such as furniture, cabinets, seats, trolleys, shelves etc. Hence, a librarian can start supply of library facilities for school libraries (especially private schools), private libraries,

special libraries, academic libraries and public libraries.

Establishing and Managing Libraries for Organizations and Individuals: Librarians can delve into establishing and managing libraries for organizations or individuals. It could be a traditional print library or electronic library. Some individuals acquire lots of information resources (books, journals, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts, audiovisuals etc) but don't have organization knowledge. Hence, librarians can make prominence by taking up such task.

Compilation of Directories and Bibliographies: Compilation of directories is another entrepreneurial opportunity that librarians can venture into as entrepreneurs. There are so much that need to be compiled. It can be "Who is who" in virtually anything, profession, village, organization, etc. The telephone directory is a wonderful tool. Librarians, as entrepreneurs can earn sustainable income through publishing of subject and trade bibliographies.

Freelancing: A freelancer is an independent person offering his/her **service** where required and not attached to any single establishment. It can be in several fields like outdoor writing, copy-editing, publishing, proof reading, real estate editors, etc. The internet has helped to improve this career as freelancers can always find substantial information from the internet.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Practices by Librarians

Some of the challenges of entrepreneurship practices by librarians are:

Economic Meltdown: This factor has been a serious challenge to investors due to the recession the country Nigeria and Africa as a continent has been through. It has made so many businesses to be stagnated thereby creating apathy on the side of librarians from indicating interest in starting a personal business or becoming an entrepreneur due to the fact that the economic system is not favorable to small scale business enterprises.

Government Policies: Policy as the term implies, it is said to be a plan of action meant for achieving a specific goal or an objective. However, in the Nigerian setting the reverse is the case purposely because the policies that are been made by the selected few who are representatives in government do so just to favour themselves that are in power without considering the masses or the citizenry. There are numerous past incidents where some governments have demolished houses, shops, markets and business buildings even with

short notice to the owners of the structures. More so, the incessant revenue charges, high interest rate, inflating tax charges are frustrating entrepreneurial ventures.

Anxiety of Rivalry and Disappointment: Anxiety of rivalry and disappointments deter librarians from attempting into entrepreneurship. These anxieties usually arise out of lack of rudimentary entrepreneurship training which would enable them to identify and harness the abundant opportunities available in their environment.

Absence of Entrepreneurship Spirit: Many librarians are deficient of the entrepreneurship spirit to create viable businesses that would make them significant in the knowledge age. Yet, a good number of non-librarians are going admirably enterprising.

Problem of Generating Compelling Business Ideas: So many practicing and non-practicing librarians have all it takes to become successful entrepreneurs. However, those aspiring to be entrepreneurs are faced with the problem of how to generate compelling business ideas for new entrepreneurial businesses. This inability of not knowing how to generate ideas usually breeds frustration; thereby making the aspiring entrepreneur to start a business similar to the one he has seen around him. Besides, the entrepreneur not having the initial ingredient of success-the entrepreneurial mindset of bringing about a change, creating an invention or beating competition-soon goes under when faced with endless competition from existing businesses.

Poor Sources of Fund: Access to funds and from various financial institutions has been a bane to the act of entrepreneurship and it could be very frustrating to entrepreneurs especially the ones who are just starting. In most cases, rather than go through the rigorous processes of accessing loans they forfeit the business plan. More so, loan requirements such as collateral, sureties etc could deter one from a business initiative.

Poor Attitude of Librarians: Some of the librarians' snowless interest and concern in showcasing their ideas and initiatives beyond the four walls of the library institutions. They are lazy and deter from activities that will be stressful on them or require investing much energy and time.

Excessive Workload on the Librarian: There is excessive workload or job task on librarians due to shortage of librarians employed in various library institutions in Nigeria. Low number of librarians carrying out job task of numerous unemployed graduates has had adverse effects. Evidently, enormous workloads hinder them from thinking out of the box.

CONCLUSION

Information has now become an economic resources and commodities that can be marketed and librarians have to remain focused and informed in order to enhance their businesses. Librarians as entrepreneurs can work in different organizations to meet their needs by providing resources, services and expertise to address the diverse requirements of customers. The need for entrepreneurship in library and information science profession and self-development is now a priority to librarians because entrepreneurship involves passion, innovation, creativity, competencies, skills, risk, reward, self-reliance and self-motivation

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended as follows:

- Government should endeavor to make policies that are favourable to small scale businesses in the country so as to encourage entrepreneurship.
- The library and information science schools in Nigeria should reinforce practice-based teaching and learning. They should also continue to encourage creativity using new technologies, new skills and explore new opportunities in library and information science entrepreneurship.
- Librarians that are trained in the field of librarianship should develop the spirit and endeavour to venture into the entrepreneurship areas so as to prevent other professionals from taking foods and opportunities from our tables.
- Librarians should equip themselves with necessary skills, attitudes and values needed for improved library services to cope with increasing entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT. It is an essential mechanism through which librarians can earn money to finance themselves on self-development programmes.
- Financial institutions should make policies that will be favourable to entrepreneurs for easy access to loans.
- Library managements should encourage librarians to engage in self-development programmes.
- The government should initiate loan schemes and programmes to finance business ideas of young entrepreneur as well as create policies that will be favourable to young investors.
- Librarians should enroll in skill acquisition programmes and entrepreneurship courses in order to acquire necessary entrepreneurial skills.

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