

Empowering LIS Educators with ICT skills for Creative and Innovative Knowledge Sharing in the Digital Age

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Abstract

The rapidly evolving exigencies of the digital age are part of the compelling forces for all professionals including Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators to collaborate in terms of knowledge sharing rather than being islands to one another. Innovative and creative knowledge sharing coupled with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) proficiency would go a long way in not only empowering but in enhancing the productivity, the relevance and the profitability of LIS Educators in the digital age. The paper, therefore, examined how the possession of ICT skills coupled with creative and innovative knowledge sharing could serve as empowering and productive tools for LIS educators in the digital age. Issues that border on how ICT could improve creativity and innovation in knowledge sharing were also discussed. A nexus and the inextricable interplay among ICT Skills; Creativity; Innovation; Knowledge Sharing, and digital age were equally established. It was concluded that LIS educators would be empowered for optimum relevance, creativity and innovative knowledge sharing in the digital age, if they are proficient in the use of ICT. The paper recommended amongst others the need for paradigm shift from the traditional or orthodox practice of knowledge sharing to the evolving trends and best practices of knowledge sharing in the (rapidly changing world) digital age.

Key words: Knowledge sharing; ICT Skills; Creativity; Innovation; LIS Educators; Digital Age.

Introduction

The digital age has not merely turned the whole globe into a global village but has made professionals including library and information science (LIS) educators to be dependent on one another for profitable knowledge sharing. Innovative and creative knowledge sharing among LIS educators are indispensable tools for plausible empowerment and maximum productivity of LIS educators in the (rapidly changing world) digital age. In 1969, Kenneth Goldstein looked hundred years into the future and speculated in his writing that the electronic world will connect libraries, museums and houses of friends. Today, these ideas are evident in our lives with the pace of change getting even faster; the future will be shaped by many inventions yet to be imagined (Goldstein 1969: in Gregson et, al., 2015). The computer age has witnessed evolving changes in all professions including Library and information Science (LIS) educators' profession. The emergence of ICT has placed a

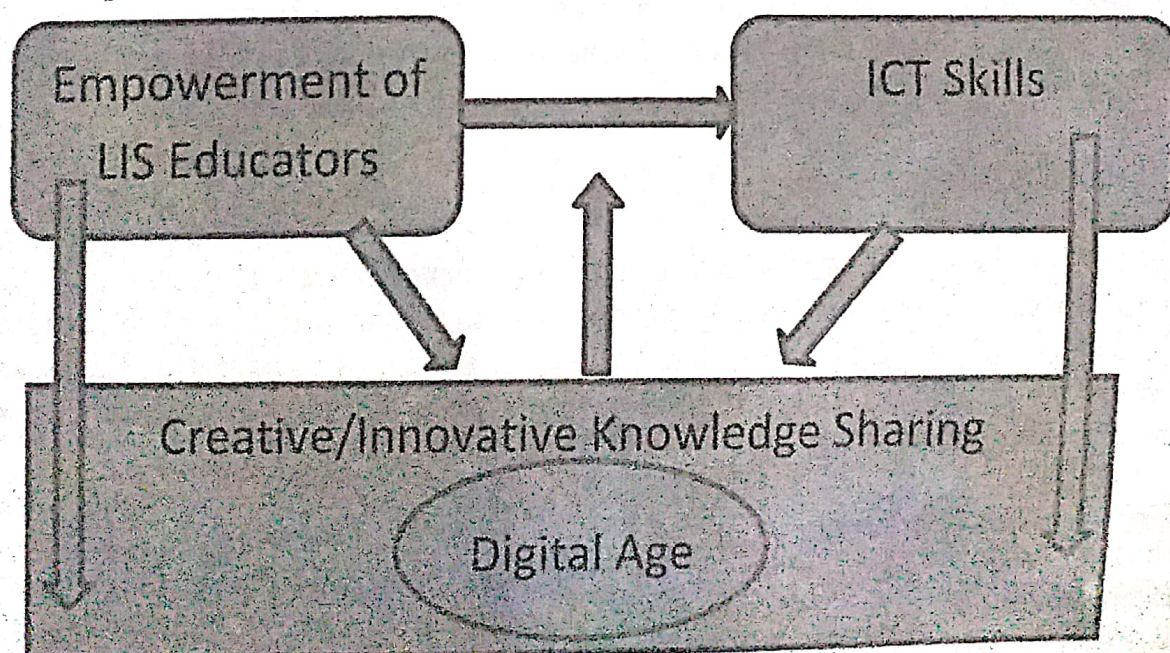
demand on libraries to meet up with the trend; hence, the need to swiftly transcend into evolving technologies in order to be relevant in the digital age. The evolving technology is anchored on creativity and innovation through the use of ICT in the emerging global information economy. Nkiko et.al. (2014) opined that creativity and innovation rule the world hence the need for change through new invention, idea, products, concepts, strategy, approach and methodology. For any profession including LIS profession to experience progress, change is a must.

Library and information Science is an interdisciplinary profession with computer programming, information systems and technology in the present information driven milieu. Creativity in knowledge sharing among LIS educators is all about discovering new ways of sharing knowledge effectively. On the other hand, innovation is the ability to apply new ideas to knowledge sharing that will enable LIS educators share knowledge differently through individual imagination, insight, intuition and initiatives for effective knowledge sharing (Onuoha et. al.,2014).

Knowledge is linked to economic growth and globalisation. Knowledge sharing is an important factor in enhancing creativity and innovativeness; hence the need for empowering LIS Educators with ICT skills for effective knowledge sharing in the digital age. Over the years, usage of ICT application is positively associated with effective knowledge sharing capabilities. Knowledge sharing has emerged in the digital age with wide-ranging implications for improved innovation and creativity. ICT empowerment is indispensable for better knowledge sharing with the view of developing LIS educators into competent and confident professionals who can manage the new information environment efficiently.

The paper delved into the impact of ICT skills on LIS educators and how effective knowledge sharing through the instrumentalities of creativity and innovativeness could serve as empowering tools for LIS educators. Recommendations were drawn from various researches conducted by other authorities.

Fig.1 Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors Original Construct (2019)

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework for the paper. It is based on the postulation that the attention of everybody in the 21st century is anchored on the digital age. Empowerment of LIS Educators is necessary if they would be able to cope successfully with the exigencies and the challenges of the digital age. That is why the arrow is pointing towards the digital age. ICT skills are inalienable qualities and weapons that LIS Educators must be armed with for successful enterprise in the digital age. For LIS Educators to prosper in this age of change it is equally imperative for them to be creative and innovative. They should not stay as islands to themselves. They are expected to be pro-active, creative and innovative in sharing of knowledge with other professionals. Creativity, innovativeness, novelty, resourcefulness of ideas, coupled with ICT versatility would go a long way to empower LIS Educators in the digital age

Creativity and Innovativeness among LIS Educators

Innovation in librarianship simply means new ways of improving library services by introducing significant and relevant novelties and alteration of what is established (Onuoha et. al., 2015). Onuoha et. al.,(2015) identified further the challenges to innovation and creativity as lack of ICT skills, lack of innovative and creative skills, and lack of finance to acquire technological facilities, suppression of creative ideas by senior colleagues and non-attendance to conferences or workshops where new skills can be acquired. They discovered that lack of innovative and creative skills among librarians was low with a frequency of 44.3% indicating that 55.7% of librarians had innovative skills but skills were suppressed by lack of ICT skills.

Kumaresan (2010) in his article gave insights to knowledge sharing innovation in Qatar. The creation of the Education City Library Directors' Council (ECLDC) in Qatar for creating a knowledge sharing culture is worth emulating. ECLDC was created for the purpose of knowledge sharing and cooperation among libraries. The council meets regularly and shares knowledge of experience and policies. ECLDC has special interest groups that involve library professions within Qatar with a good number of professionals in attendance of their workshops. Digital repository has been created which are accessed remotely by individuals with minutes of meeting and information from various workshops. This has been of great benefit to library professionals.

Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators

The professional environment of LIS educators is changing significantly due to the demographic, political, educational and technological developments (Onuoha et. al. 2015). Due to the evolving knowledge sharing systems there is an urgent need for LIS educators to be trained on the use of ICT for effective knowledge sharing. LIS educators should aim at undertaking instruction, research and service programmes that meet current and emerging Library information Technology needs (Muthu et.al., 2015)

ICT Skills for LIS Educators

The reason for emphasising on the importance of ICT on creative and innovative knowledge sharing has to do with the current globalisation. In fact, the ultimate goal of LIS educators in the world is to ensure that new LIS professionals could possess ICT skills to

meet the challenges of the digital world. There is a large population of LIS educators in universities, educational institutions and organisations. Gregson et al. (2015) observed that the present age is in a new dawn of the second machine age requiring understanding the nature of technological progress in the era of digital hardware, software and networks. This calls for a dire necessity of empowering LIS Educators with ICT skills.

In the present system of education, technological communication devices like computer, Internet and laptops are being used in a variety of learning environment (Muthu et al., 2015). Although libraries struggle with budget and personnel cuts coupled with a dramatic change in user needs and expectations (Johnson, 2014). Issues that border on budget for acquisition of ICT resources could be overcome through advocacies to relevant organisations for funding (Koloniari et al., 2016, Onuoha et al., 2015).

Hundu and Anaele (2014) asserted that Library and Information Science educators are increasingly working in a networked environment, dealing with library automation packages and web based information resources and services. Every LIS educator must have knowledge and skills for handling information technology and the competency for creation and collection of information using the Internet. Hundu and Anaele (2014) argued further that LIS schools are not able to adequately respond to emerging information scenario created by electronic publishing and dynamics of the knowledge society.

In the past, libraries were considered to operate in a rather stable environment, devoid of competition, and their survival was not thought to depend on outperforming their rivals (Wen, in Koloniari et al., 2016). Today, as information technology has facilitated the development of a variety of information services, libraries face the risk of losing their customers, if they fail to excel in services (Wang, in Koloniari, 2016). As Wang in Koloniari et al (2006) stated, libraries need to attract users just as businesses need to attract customers (Koloniari, Vraimaki and Fassoulis, 2016). On top of competition, there is need for reviewing LIS educators' courses keeping in view completely redefined and re-casted modern information systems, global technological developments and local needs (Hundu and Anaele 2014).

Hundu and Anaele 2014 noted further in a research that "traditional LIS programmes focus on library administration, cataloguing and classification, archives and manuscript collections, children's librarianship, records management, public and reference services, acquisitions and collection management and special collections, whereas Information science, information systems, and information technology programmes, instead, focus on databases and data warehouses, digital libraries, emerging technologies, instructional technologies, multimedia, social media, web design and development. As an interdisciplinary subject, library and information science has been more closely associated with computer programming, information systems and technology in this information driven society.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge has been widely recognised as the most valuable asset of any organisation for improving service quality and achieving innovation (Koloniari, Vraimaki and Fassoulis, 2016). There has been an increasing importance attached to effective knowledge sharing on organisational performance and effectiveness. Sharing of knowledge

is very important to library professionals and this attitude has to be nurtured within and between libraries (Kumaresan, 2010). ICT has made sharing of knowledge easier, faster and with great possibilities at different levels and locations.

Wen (2005), in Kumaresan (2010), identified two important influencing factors to knowledge sharing, which include human and technology factor: employees and the technology factor involves knowledge management system and advanced software for information retrieval. According to Hundu and Anaele (2014), the current trends in library and information science can be considered in the following ways: Knowledge of Computer: The age is termed as 'computer age'. One who has no knowledge of computer is regarded as illiterate. That is why the content of computer is included in Library and Information Science curriculum. Internet: The knowledge of Internet is the need of the time because Internet is a pervasive and ubiquitous information factor of the age. The future librarian must be given the knowledge of this technique. With the use of computer old topics like classification and cataloguing are taught in a new fashion nowadays. Library Security: In order to make the librarians cautious regarding the library security, they should be acquainted with the new techniques. These include magnetic security system, Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) and Radio-frequency identification (RFID). The Library and Information Science Education is imparted through distance education mode: the distance education has made it possible for many people to take education while doing their job. Information Literacy Programme: It is really very difficult to reach up to the expectations of readers. Therefore, it became the need of the time to arrange information literacy programmes. It will ultimately equip the librarian with some specific skills.

From the literatures reviewed, LIS schools in Nigeria have not been able to respond adequately to emerging information scenario created by electronic publishing and dynamics of the knowledge society hence the need to empower LIS educators with ICT skills for them to be able to adequately cope with the rapidly emerging exigencies and unfolding scenarios of the digital age.

Conclusion

It can be safely concluded from the paper that the imperativeness of ICT skills, creativity and innovation for productive knowledge sharing in the digital age cannot be over-emphasised. For LIS educators to be empowered the need to possess requisite and relevant ICT skills so as to remain relevant, creative and innovative in this digital age could not be over-flogged. ICT skills coupled with creativity and innovative knowledge sharing would go a long way not only in broadening the horizon of LIS Educators, but would as well extend the frontier of knowledge of the profession. Knowledge sharing and collaborative researches would equally increase the research productivity of the LIS educators in the digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in the paper, the following recommendations are made.

1. There should be a thorough re-examination of teaching and learning by analysing key characteristic technologies and recommending media and technologies for high quality knowledge sharing.

2. LIS educators should be permitted to attend ICT biased conferences and workshops since these are platforms for acquiring innovative and creative skills in current trends of knowledge sharing.
3. LIS educators' knowledge sharing environments should have modern technologies installed with access to those technologies.
4. Organising on-the-job training and in-house capacity building sessions for LIS educators on ICT packages for effective knowledge sharing should be encouraged.
5. Since financing of acquisition of ICT packages and training of LIS educators can be a major challenge it is therefore of great importance for LIS Educators to advocate for funds from relevant authorities.
6. There is an urgent need for the review of LIS curriculum to massively accommodate ICT courses.
7. LIS educators should be encouraged to carry out researches for personal improvement.

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