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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE LIBRARIANS IN GLOBALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: ISSUES, BENEFITS AND BARRIERS

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### ABSTRACT

Changes in higher education, the new student-centered paradigm and new pedagogy approaches have also created a need for a reconceptualisation of the roles and responsibilities of librarians. Nigerian libraries, like their counterparts elsewhere, is faced with challenges of globalization. Library services now cuts across geographical boundaries. As an integral part of the campus, the academic library will be profoundly affected by changes in the academy itself. The authors of this paper examine the current trends and developments of globalization of higher education and the roles of the librarian to these changes. It also discusses various issues connected with globalization of education specifically, its implications, barriers and benefits for Nigerian libraries and librarians. Finally, the paper makes conclusion and recommendations on how Nigerian libraries can cope with and reap the full benefits of globalization.

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## INTRODUCTION

Changes in higher education and globalization are provoking a radical change in Nigeria, within the past half-decade or so. There has been a dramatic adoption of ICTs in Nigeria and this has led tremendously to the globalization of education in the country. The term globalization is used to describe the ability to access information using telecommunications based Internet resources. It provides the ability to create, organize, manipulate and access information from remote locations across the globe in a matter of seconds. The importance of information infrastructures and network such as LAN, and other virtual structures in accelerating the globalization of education and attendant transformation cannot be over emphasized. "Education of today has shifted from the conventional method. Information technology (ICT) is responsible for the changing role of traditional method of handling information packaged in books to that of computer network dealing with all forms of knowledge across international boundaries. The implication of this phenomenon is that ICT users in any given organization that adopt the technology can have access to global resources or information, both within and outside the country (where there is interaction) through the use of relevant ICTs. Globalization of education at this digital age implies familiarity with the workings of ICT resources support for provision of quality and effective instructional material via the Internet.

What makes the technologies to differ is the surface area and depth of the selective senses that they appeal to. What is offered in the classroom for Nigerian learner can neither adequately develop the potential of the learners nor prepare them for a productive life in society; (NTI, 2007); they are hopelessly inadequate to match the needs of our society and the needs of individual students. From the foregoing, the interest is to make the learner a more active learner, not just responding to stimuli as in the behaviorist rubric but engaging, grappling, and seeking to make sense of things, thus summarizing as a constructivist posture. It is worth mentioning in this regard that while other disciplines are relatively adjusting their paradigms to the new demands and realities of globalization and making great strides forward, Nigerian education theory and practice continues to lag far behind.

Policy-makers in Nigeria should wake up to the warning call that with increasing intensity today, information scarcity is being replaced by information abundance, a process that inevitably should force our educational planners and policy-makers to coin a new definition of the role of formal-learning institutions. Accordingly, the school should alter its function from being a primary provider of information and knowledge, to serving as a context in which one can learn how to: organize; manage; analyze; verify; apply; interpret; and Give meaning to information. As we can see it, the actual learning paradigm will shift from information acquisition to information management on the part of the learner. This is indeed a profound shift in the core function of formal-learning

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institutions. The issue is that, the new organizations of today need people with high cognitive and affective skills, who are creative and adaptable. More specifically, today's world requires individuals who possess:

- an inner appreciation of inter-connectedness;
- a strong identity of sense of being;
- a sufficiently large vision and imagination to see how specifics relate to each other;
- the capacity to 'go with the flow' and to deal with paradox and uncertainty; and
- A capacity to build communities and live in relationship with others.

Jurich, (2007) this normative outlook will help us reach the conclusion that in the information age, children do not learn in boxes, thus the strict division of curriculum into subject matters does not lead to effective learning. Thinking-based curricula, which encourage and allow children to think, if handled in an integrated fashion, yield the best results. All genuine ICTs based learning is active, not passive. It is a process of discovery in which the student is the main agent, not the teacher. (Adler, 1982) Students learn what they care about and remember what they understand. They must to source the net productively, talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). The sort of ICTs based teaching learning and library service we propose requires that we encourage active learning that we become knowledgeable about the ways in which our students source the net, hear, understand, interpret, and integrate ideas. (AAC Task Group on General Education, 1988)

### **The Right to Education**

In our globalized world, the problem of justice is central: namely, that all men and women, wherever they are and whatever their condition of life, should have the right to, and the possibility of a good education and general access to culture. This means a goal of basic education-up to nine years-for all, then secondary and higher education on the basis of abilities and resources. Clearly, the globalized world also implies an improvement in education not only for the inhabitants of the developing world but also for the developed one. Cetus, (1997). Everyone has the right to an education that sees the environment as a home, so as to prevent it from becoming harmful to health and well-being. Most alarming is the fact that worldwide nearly 200 million children and young people who should be receiving basic education are not enrolled in school at all. Today, in the face of globalization, global migrations, the explosion of knowledge and the concomitant emergence of a knowledge-intensive economy, and above all the compelling obligation to fight poverty by all means throughout the world, education may require serious re-thinking. The adverse consequences of inadequate education policies for poor people are amplified by globalization. Education should also transmit knowledge, higher-order cognitive skills and the interpersonal sensibility required to help boys, girls, men and women to become fully themselves and to interact with others. It should develop their ability to

observe, to reason, to synthesize and create ethical values, and to develop a sense of justice, respect, tolerance and compassion for others. It should emphasize the responsibility of people to protect the environment for the benefit of present and future generations, preventing pollution and ecological deterioration and promoting conservation and sustainable development. In its transmission of knowledge and its fostering of creativity, education should convey the deep lessons of the past and communicate the opportunities and risks that will be faced by humanity in the future. In particular in the context of globalization, respect for cultural diversity and the preservation of the elements of cultural identity are essential in the educational process. New generations have to understand in a clear way their own culture in relation to other cultures in order to develop self-awareness when facing cultural changes and to promote peaceful understanding and tolerance, thereby identifying and encouraging true human values within an inter-cultural perspective. At the same time, education should aim to establish that common sense of humanity which is essential for the maintenance of peace. This could be achieved by drawing on the universality of ethical principles and norms, which are, for instance, expressed in the concepts of human rights and the dignity of the person, as well as on the universality of knowledge, wisdom and science.

Teaching requires on the part of teachers a high level of knowledge so that students, who learn through the process of instruction, may achieve a standard of education that they would not obtain on their own. Akanni, (2008) their role as agents of education has to be recognized and supported by every possible means: for example, continuous coaching by those who have a more direct access to knowledge (especially trained scholars and scientists), and the updating of professional training, suitable salaries and the availability of information technology. Globalisation of education offers extraordinary opportunities for the renewal of education because of its capacity to connect people, its ability to promote the accessibility of remote areas, its decreasing costs and the potential volume of the information it can convey. It will thus be possible to reduce the costs of education for each child, even in poor areas. However, IT tools do not necessarily achieve education on their own. They need to be accompanied by a conceptual vision in order to promote dialogue, the active participation of teachers, the organization of knowledge and an awareness of the importance of values.

### **Globalisation Ambitions for Education**

Global influences also affect higher education. Today virtually every country has three higher education ambitions. First is a demand for greater levels of access, and in every part of the world access to higher education is rising rapidly. In the late 1960s, there was no nation in Western Europe where the proportion of the age group in higher education (18 to 22) was greater than 8 percent; today there is no nation in Western Europe where the proportion in higher education is lower than 35 percent. Worldwide enrollment is growing between 10 and 15 percent per year, including middle and low-income countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The second ambition in every country is to improve the quality of higher education. Over the last decade there has been a revolution in the criteria that help define higher education quality. High-quality higher education now requires electronic modernity in

classrooms, dorms, libraries, science laboratories and study halls. Mojah, (2004) Students are often older, work part time, and live far away from the campus. High-quality syllabi are no longer based on textbooks but on the most up-to-date information from print and electronic sources. Information for students is scanned and available online. Students have access to curricular information wherever they live or travel. What's more, classroom instruction has changed. Class time is no longer devoted to providing information for students; instead it is devoted to the analysis of information absorbed prior to class.

The third ambition is the provision of a high-quality academic library. Academic library used to be defined by the quantity of its holdings. Today it is defined by the quantity of its access to information. The difference is enormous. Every high-quality academic library has enough money to join exclusive "Information Networks" where holdings are shared with one another. Networks of academic libraries are transnational, and cover university libraries in Europe, Asia, and North America. Access to information is what separates the excellent libraries from the mediocre. All academic services, both teaching and bibliographic, are delivered through broadband facilities. Rankings of universities, in fact, now include the size of a university's bandwidth. Universities with low bandwidth cannot compete in quality with universities with large bandwidth. The development of libraries and information centers and their work has suffered from the poor economic situation in many African countries including Nigeria. This slow economic growth according to Brophy, (2001) has points to a bleak future for Africa's libraries. A poor economy has led to inadequate budget allocations, the slow pace of technology infusion into library services, inadequate human resources development and capacity, insufficient and obsolete infrastructure, and the exorbitant cost.

### **Globalisation: Libraries and Librarians**

Libraries are large, sprawling organisations that have complicated interrelated parts; they should be understood in the same structural terms applied to all modern organisations in higher education. The roles that librarians play in globalising their own practices, experiences and beliefs may be institutionally or personally driven. Leadership for change may come from a variety of internal and external forces such as the government, the vice chancellors, professional organisations or the library administration, which itself is under pressure to change. For some individual librarians, being globally competent citizens is understood as an important thing, enabling them better to carry out their professional service, particularly in regard to changing populations of students. However varied the forces driving change, the traditional roles of librarians are shifting from the parochial to the global. (AARL, 2006) For Librarians, what this translates to is the need to learn new instructional methods for working directly with diverse populations in meaningful ways that support curriculum change and a flexible learning paradigm that supports student-centered lifelong learning habits. This is not a day development. Libraries around the world in the past four or five decades have endeavored to co-operate and collaborate through inter library loan system and formation of library consortia, which are alliances formed by member libraries on

voluntary basis to facilitate resource sharing in pursuit of common interest (Aina, Adebowale and Ogundipe 2010). In a consortium, the member libraries are linked together through electronic information network. This reduces the costs of acquisition of information materials and still allows users of individual library to have access to a great number of information materials that ordinarily one library may not possess. With advances in information and communication technology, co-operation and collaboration of libraries through inter – library loan system as well as formation of consortium has become a global reality. Thus, librarianship is now a global issue. The application of ICT in libraries has widened the scope of librarianship and conferred new roles on libraries. This situation has placed more demand on the ability of librarians. However, new skills-both generic and specific-are needed to teach information literacy in a global society, skills that were not generally taught in library science and information programs. According to Nimon, (2006) as the use of new, internationally-based technologies became widespread, the skills and ability to access, evaluate and use meaningful content became ever more important. Librarians would have to take responsibility, along with teaching academics, for providing those skills; they had to acquire the teaching knowledge before they could teach information literacy skills.

For Australian librarians, there was a growing recognition Universitas 21, one innovative and entrepreneurial international collaborative effort has brought a number of research universities together in an alliance called Universitas 21. Established in 1997, Universitas 21 is a corporate network of 18 research universities spread across North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of the alliance is to engage in traditional academic exchanges, international collaboration between members and entrepreneurial activities. While globalisation has been the driving force in formalising this new corporate configuration of universities, one of the most active arms of the alliance is that of the Universitas 21 Library Group. (Johnson and webler 2003) University librarians from each of the universitias attend international meetings in member countries. Their agenda are designed to further both the aims of the parent organization and those specific to libraries regarding such issues as quality assurance measures, information literacy, staff exchange for professional development and collaborative online reference and communications. Their strategic plan describes vision, goals and strategies, which, if carried out fully, will provide an exceptionally high level of international experience for librarians.

Discussions of gaining funding from Universitas 21 for international exchanges are in the meetings' minutes, and it is clear that the university librarians want to encourage international mobility and collaboration for their staff members. Nevertheless, it is the drive for legitimacy and expertise, played out individually and through library departments or professional group affiliations that is the true source of successful globalisation strategies and practices. Those who engage in these efforts enlarge their perspective in ways that lead to serving their constituents respectfully and satisfactorily.

## Librarians and the Changing Roles

For librarians, the definitions of international education encompass all of the meanings understood by academics and include additional outcomes that revolve around solutions that support library service. Up until the 1980s, the work of most librarians not employed in library administration was localised in one department, and so internationalisation was seen in terms that were work related. Under the pressures of globalisation and internationalisation, the activities of librarians have expanded considerably and thus definitions of library work and international education have enlarged from old understandings.

Globalisation and internationalisation have contributed to the need for a different type of librarian, one who is capable of working and thinking in new ways that encompass cultural sensitivity. Librarians need new perspectives and skills training in order to be effective within a changing and increasingly international context. How then have librarians responded to these changes? Although some of the literature brings up the complaint that librarians are traditionally passive and slow to make changes. Librarians needed new forms of collective leadership to support professional development and to work within the new system. (Chiswick, & Miller, in *AARL*, 2006) By taking on a more corporate way of working, librarians have been able to build international collaborative efforts for library infrastructure and tap into competitive funding for equipment, teaching and learning projects, facilities, and quality assurance projects. The need for new technologies, competition for decreasing budgets, and over-stretched, understaffed libraries. Just as other department heads have had to respond to organisational change and become more managerial under restructuring, university librarians have been pushed in the same directions.

Burrow (2006) 'The university librarians will be treated as the chief executive, responsible for the efficient management of the library service, and will be left to make his or her own arrangements for consulting users on specific matters of policy'. Globalization has driven many changes. The growth of managerial leadership is one response. Yet another response takes place on the institutional level. Libraries share a special position in the life of the campus: they are central to the educational mission, but they are not moneymakers. When federal and state governments adjure universities to be entrepreneurial and find new sources of funding to further operations with their voracious need for funding, might seem to be a mismatch for this new mission. In-line with the above, librarians should as a matter of necessity, acquire knowledge in basic ICT for effective information provision for higher education in the country. Information delivery should be based on the ability to generate or acquire process, analyze and disseminate information and make it available to users.

## Benefits of Globalisation for Knowledge Education

Given the increasing economic globalization and restructuring in the world political and economic systems, and the requirements for knowledge and information within that system, educational needs (in terms of structure, function, curriculum and approach) at all levels, especially at the tertiary

level, have changed. These educational requirements for the workforce of the future are extremely important. There are a range of new technologies and new techniques engendered by the Information Revolution that allow for the production of new knowledge and the dissemination of data, information and knowledge. Some of these technologies include the Internet, World Wide Web, CD-ROM, and printed, audio, video and other electronic media forms. These new technologies allow for academic practitioners the library in particular, to move from being "sages on the stage" into the role of the "guide on the side" and assist students in gaining the skills and abilities required to acquire and utilise knowledge contained in various forms around the world. Some of these new technologies include:

- Uses virtual teams around the world
- Break the boundaries of space and time
- Enhanced Educational Development
- Improvement in the Status of Librarians
- Digitization of Local Content
- Improved Collection Development and
- Conservation of Space, among others.
- Is an agile and flexible system

## Barriers Preventing Globalisation of Education

According to Peacock (2000), the relative inequality of librarians and academics prevents library professionals from fully integrating information literacy into curricula. Peacock suggest to develop a new generation of librarian educators, retrained as General Introduction to the Role of the Library for University Education "learning facilitators" and to forge campus-wide "alliances" to ensure that librarians and libraries to overcome their marginalisation. Peacock identifies four key barriers preventing librarians to have a greater role in the teaching and learning:

- Limited understanding of the inherent link between generic attributes and information literacy and the library's contribution to the development of both.
- Narrow appreciation of the role of the library as an active contributor to teaching and learning process (as that which extends beyond being a passive resource).
- Reluctance to engage the library in teaching and learning partnership and projects, either by exclusion or oversight.
- The high profile technologically driven initiatives which inhibit a library's ability to (i) equally attract funding that relates to teaching and learning initiatives, (ii) acquire access to course development pathways and (iii) participate in collaborative faculty and/or university projects (Peacock, 2000: 29-30).

Bruce and Lampson (2002) note, that despite some progress over the past decade, library and information professionals still report that universal information literacy is a distant, if not a receding, goal. Johnston and Webber (2003) also argue that even in the United States: "Whilst much attention has been paid to information literacy by American policy-makers, librarians and academics, the results are still relatively narrow, giving a potentially superficial guide to the nature of a curriculum for information literacy in higher education" (Virkus, 2004b). Brophy (2001) concludes that the role that

academic libraries will play in the future is thus far from clear. However, the CILIP (2002) report *Libraries and Lifelong Learning* draws the picture of the future where the library will continue to emphasize selecting, accessing, and subsidizing information resources and of equal importance will be teaching students and faculty time and place independently to identify, locate, and evaluate information. This implies strong emphasis on the application of ICTs in Nigerian libraries. Ironically, ICT is still in the infant stage in Nigeria. The issues of concern here are procurement of the high priced ICT gadgets, planning and implementation, and availability of ICT experts to man the electronic/virtual libraries. These factors have been responsible for the failure of several automation projects in the past. It is gratifying to note that two national virtual library projects are in progress in Nigeria. They should be well – funded to ensure their success.

### Conclusion

There is a paradigm shift in learning process in higher institutions in this millennium. The paradigm shift is that the society and libraries are no longer situated in the physical environment, but on virtual, online, electronic or cyberspace. Globalization and information revolution is increasingly changing the learning process in higher education. Globalization has caused librarians and higher institutions in Nigeria and developing countries to face new type of learning involving the use of ICT infrastructures to improve educational resources. Library Professionals in this environment therefore, have greater roles to play because they are the interface between information and the users in the new revolution. This has changed the needs and uses which readers in higher institutions in Nigeria make of library resources and therefore, affects librarian priorities for service delivery. It affects also the tools and system with which library professionals operate and therefore, impacts on the structures by which library services are delivered. It changes the context and format of the resources which librarians have at their disposal and therefore challenges the approach of library professionals in response to the contemporary situation.

The ICT requirements involve more than just skill acquisition: users need to develop understanding of a wide variety of pedagogical experiences. ICT standards have to be interpreted within the context of teaching and learning process, as well as planning and developing the use of library course to meet these (new) requirements. Therefore, the federal and state governments through The National Universities commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Vocational Colleges and Technical Education (NABTECH) need to invest heavily on the educational institutions. An effort towards this will create an enabling environment for librarians toward producing highly qualified ICT literates that would assist in making the integration and usage of ICTs based library services for the purpose of globalization of education a success.

### Recommendations

From all the above, the following could be recommended:

- 1) For Nigerian libraries to reap the benefit of globalization there is the need for Inter-connectivity of Nigerian libraries to facilitate resource sharing and exchange of information

within and outside Nigeria. Formation of consortium is also desirable, and maintains hybrid collections in order to satisfy the user community, since all our libraries cannot become perfectly virtual libraries overnight.

- 2) The two virtual library projects embarked upon in Nigeria – The NUC Virtual Library and another National Virtual Library under the auspices of the National Library of Nigeria should be well – funded to ensure their success.
- 3) Negotiation of contracts and access rights by Nigerian libraries must also be included
- 4) Training and re-training of librarians should be done as a routing trough in-house training or on the job to ensure that librarians are well versed in information sourcing and retrieval that is required for this global age.

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