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HARNESSING THE POTENTIALS OF EDITING SERVICES BY LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE GRADUATES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The digital age is the age of opportunities and challenges. New jobs are created, old ones are lost; some jobs hitherto done manually are now replaced by modern technologies; and many workers who lack the digital literacy to function in the new environments are phased out. Professionals in many fields are now forced to acquire new knowledge and skills or expand existing ones to remain useful in their fields or careers. With the biting effects of unemployment in Nigeria, there is the need for a deliberate policy to encourage entrepreneurial education to make library professionals and graduates of English in Nigeria to be self-employed and self-reliant. It is in the light of this that this paper sets out to examine the need for the development of a functional editing unit or services within Library and Information Science (LIS) or as a course of study on its own so as to inculcate in Library graduates and graduates of English the professional knowledge, skills and practice of manuscript editing for clients to enhance their financial status, national growth and development.

Key Words: Editing, Entrepreneurship, Librarianship, National Development, Writing

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is faced with many problems. One of the problems facing Nigeria is unemployment (Longe, 2017; Omitogun & Longe, 2017). It is common to find graduates from different fields unemployed many years after leaving school, and this happens in spite of the fact that the graduates have the requisite knowledge, ability and skills to perform their jobs (Alanana, 2003).

With the number of schools and graduates increasing over the years, the problem of unemployment requires urgent attention to fix.

Several factors are accountable for the growing incidence of unemployment among the graduate population. These factors include lack of entrepreneurial education, knowledge and skills among graduates, the growing number of graduates with no corresponding increase in the number of jobs, retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy (Oyebade, 2003), the consequence of surplus labour supply over labour demand (Adekola, Allen, Olawole-Isaac, Akanbi & Adewumi, 2016), among others. The problem of unemployment has been compounded by the inability of government and the private sector to create jobs for the people coupled with the zeal of all educated people or graduates' interest in white colour jobs.

To overcome the challenges posed by unemployment, it is important to examine the nature and content of school curricula which give students and graduates the requisite knowledge, ability and skills necessary to become self-employed or self-reliant after graduation. The curriculum to focus this on is the curriculum designed by the National Universities Commission (2014) and the need to develop appropriate institutional and entrepreneurial knowledge, ability and skills of graduates of English Language and LIS.

Incidentally, both the Departments of English Language and LIS in the universities are concerned with the production and distribution of appropriate information, as well as equipping their graduates with requisite knowledge, skills and ability to function independently in their respective. In keeping with changing trends, the curriculum of LIS education demands training librarians and information professionals to acquire knowledge, skills and ability to meet the challenges of the ever-changing information society (Chu, 2006). However, in spite of the

enormous benefits derivable from entrepreneurial activities, which seeks to make graduates of English Language and LIS innovative and self-productive, it appears that some graduates do not seek to offer such entrepreneurial services, such as editing services. Besides, there is no editing services unit at the moment in the Nigerian public and academic libraries and those who offer paid editing services in Nigeria do not indulge in it as a professional undertaking and, even where they claim to be doing it as a profession, their 'clients' are often restricted to family members, colleagues or acquaintances.

In the light of the apparent economic and academic benefits of editing services, this paper seeks to espouse the potentials of editing services within public and academic libraries, as well as the need to impart in students/graduates of English Language and LIS the knowledge, ability and skills of editing manuscripts to enhance their economic status and national development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) (Shapiro & Sokol, 1982). According to the TPB, attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behaviours determine intentions. On the other hand, EEM hypothesizes that the entrepreneurial intention is a function of perceived desirability, feasibility and the propensity to act. The overlapping nature of these theories reflects how the intention in TPB determines desirability and feasibility, which again, determine entrepreneurial intention. A consideration of the theories provides a good way of understanding the role of employee's intention and entrepreneurial intention in seeking self-employment. Individuals do not just set out to engage in self-employment unless motivated by a particular intention and the desire to attain a corresponding behaviour.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Some concepts and terms repeatedly come into use in the course of reflecting on the role of editing services as a potential source of income for graduates of English Language and LIS. It is important, therefore, to examine how they are appropriated for the purpose of this discussion.

The term “editing” does not lend itself easily to a comprehensive definition. However, Sharpe and Gunther (1994) provide one of the definitions of editing of catholic importance thus:

Editing is a broad-ranging concept, an art as well as a craft. In crossword puzzles, the word ‘edit’ is the answer to a whole list of clues: review, revise, alter, redact, refine, emend, correct. The craft can be learned fairly easily by diligent attention to the rules of grammar and the conventions of usage and style. To master the art, however, rules are not enough; this mastery requires a special sensibility, a finely tuned ear, and an instinct that comes only with years of experience (1994, p.1).

A much more encompassing definition of editing is put forward by Aghadiuno and Oryila (2017) as follows:

Editing is any activity undertaken to shape and fine-tune a manuscript. Editing encompasses all activities carried out to fix errors in a manuscript by someone who possesses the requisite knowledge, skills and capacity, such as reviewing and improving all aspects of grammar, language usage, punctuation, spelling, diction, style, methodology, theory, characterization, organization, discussion, facts and general problems of craft intended to give the manuscript a presentable and publishable outlook. Editing is a process—and not a single event (p.3).

Discussions about the need to embrace editing as a profession among graduates of English as well as the need to create an editing services unit within public libraries or academic libraries fit into the context of entrepreneurship education or knowledge, which is gradually permeating almost all strata of education in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education “is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers” (Oduwaiye, 2014, pL3, quoted in Ekoja & Odu, 2016, p. 49). Entrepreneurial

education enables graduates to be employers of labour, to be self-employed by indulging in activities which generate additionally income for the person or the business undertaken by the person. In an age where paid employment, entrepreneurial education helps academic department to produce graduates who are innovative and enterprising. The activities the graduates indulge in thus help to generate income which help them solve their personal problems as well as increase economic growth and development.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship are also related, but different. According to Urwin (2011), self-employment raises legal question that borders on the distinction between “employees and the self-employed” and the differences is that an employee works as part of the contract of service, while the self-employed works as part of the contract for services. In Law, he notes that when the answers to the following questions are in the affirmative, then, the work is an employee:

- Do they have to do the work themselves?
- Can someone tell them at any time what to do, where to carry out the work or when and how to do it?
- Can they work a set amount of hours?
- Can someone move them from task to task?
- Are they paid by the hour, week, or month?
- Can they get overtime pay or bonus payment?

However, if the answer to the following questions is in the affirmative, then, the conclusion is that the worker is self-employed:

- Can they hire someone to do the work or engage helpers at their own expense?
- Do they risk their own money?

- Do they provide the main items of equipment they need to do their job, not just the small tools that many employees provide for themselves?
- Do they agree to do a job for a fixed price regardless of how long the job may take?
- Can they decide what work to do, how and when to do the work and where to provide the services?
- Do they regularly work for a number of different people?
- Do they have to correct unsatisfactory work in their own time and at their own expense?

Accordingly, self-employment occurs when an individual indulges in any income-generating activities and manages his or her own business, such as selling their own products and services directly to buyers. If, for example, an individual opens an office and is offering editing services to those who need them, he or she will be deemed to be into self-employment.

Self-employment is contrasted with unemployment. According to the International Labour Organization (1982), unemployment occurs when people do not have jobs and they have sought work within the past five weeks. Such individuals have nothing to receive as pay or wage at the end of the day, week or month. For the unemployed, this could create challenges which may lead to anti-social behaviors and lack of self-development (Alanana, 2003). It is in the light of this perhaps it is possible to seek editing practice as a profession and a course of study through which students of English Language and LIS could be trained to work as professional editors on graduation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interests in editing as a profession, course of study or practice of good writing within the academic circles have led to writing scholarly books, papers, guides or tips on various aspects of editing, nature of editing, significance of editing to writing, entrepreneurial benefits of editing to authors, writers, scholars and other professionals. Much of these works are relevant to the development of a strong professional tradition of editing in public libraries, as well as for the career development among students or graduates of English Language and Library and Information Science who wish to take up a career in professional writing and editing.

The development of editing as a profession, course of study or practice of good writing has a long history traceable to the emergence of a written tradition and practice in the western world. Historically, the modern form of English alphabets from where people learn to string words together existed purely in form of cuneiform, hieroglyphics, pictographs and ideograms, making Jean François Champollion to provide some of the earliest form of meaning about the phonetic characteristics of some of the alphabets (Bruce, 1948). The traditional practice of writing using the modern English alphabets originated mostly from other languages, such as Latin and Greek. In fact, according to Bruce (1948), the 26 letters of the Modern English came from the 23 Latin alphabets. Initially, English had 16 alphabets. Over the years, the alphabets have undergone a process of refinements. Indeed, writing is central to the evolution of editing practice globally.

At the moment, there are books detailing such matters as technical editing, self-editing, editing prose, editing poetry, editing children academic writing, how to write and edit (Oryila, 2015). All these books and published papers in journals, resources in webinars, boot camps, and lectures contain useful guides which should be found a toolkit of a professional editor.

In Nigeria, it has been shown that entrepreneurship development and innovations have been manifested in all aspects of the economy via micro business, micro finance, small and medium industries, information/telecom services, as well as personal services in food vending/restaurant, garments making, embroidering, agricultural produce, music and film production (Onimole & Olaiya, 2018). As a result of this, it is also important to tailor the education of students in English Language and LIS in a manner that their graduates can become self-employed in the practice of editing and editing services.

THE TASK OF THE PROFESSIONAL EDITOR

The tasks of the professional editor are varied. Graduates of English Language and Library and Information Science who intend to venture into editing as professionals must be versed in the following editing craft:

1. Proficient in the Rules of English Grammar:

Editors of manuscripts must be conversant with the basic rules of English grammar, usage, punctuation markings, tone, spelling and style. It is expected that the editor should be able to identify problems in construction associated with the violation of all forms of English and LIS at the universities in Language in all matters proper and acceptable constructions. Inability to carry out these operations on a draft makes the editor a novice lacking in training and experience.

2. Avid Reader and Reviewer

A graduate who wants to take up the task of being a professional editor must be an avid reader. By being an avid reader, the editor must have come to be familiar with different kinds of writing requiring different levels of craft and expertise to be fixed. Such an exposure gives the editor an opportunity to develop a vast repertoire of vocabulary that could come handy in the course of performing a surgical operation on a draft.

3. Passionate Writer

A graduate who wishes to take up editing as a career must cultivate the habit of being a passionate writer. As they practice writing and re-writing, it helps an editor attain proficiency in the art and science of making the most useful corrections on drafts.

SIGNIFICANCE CREATING EDITING SERVICES UNIT IN PUBLIC OR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

The modern library prides itself as a dynamic entity, receptive to constant change for the good of the server and the served (Mohammed, 2008), yet public and academic libraries lack a functional editing services unit to attend to the needs of writers, scholars, or students who need guidance and direction on what they are writing. The editing services unit of public libraries is important in the following ways:

Provides Stream of Income from Editing Consultancy: The consultancy on editing raises the revenue profile of libraries, which are hardly conceived in the Nigerian environment as revenue-generating ventures. But, with patronage from clients and the public who come for editing consultancy, they will be charged a token before accessing the professional editing services offered by the libraries. The libraries can use the income to fund some of their activities and programmes.

Provides Mentorship to Authors, Writers and Students: The most important role of the editing services unit will be to mentor authors, writers and students in the craft of profitable writing. The libraries stand a better chance of attracting writers, authors and students who will come purposely to be mentored. Although, the aim may be to impart editing skills to the clients, they will be required to pay a token which could be used to augment other revenue sources of the libraries.

Impart the Values of Self-Employment in Students, Graduates and Clients: Since 2004, there has been a paradigm shift in the education of library professionals, chiefly with the aim of embracing entrepreneurial education (Ekoja & Odu, 2016). The introduction of editing as a

course of study will impart the values of self-employment and entrepreneurship in the students. After graduation, those who go into editing as a professional will have the means to cater for their needs from the income they make from their trade.

Improves the Quality of Manuscripts: The active interest of library professionals in the determination of the fitness of drafts and production of books will improve the quality of books which eventually find their way into the libraries. With the introduction of editing on the diet of librarians, acquisition librarians can work hand in hand with editing services units to acquire stocks which meet publishable standard in all standards of editing.

Promotes Editing Boot Camps, Workshops, Conferences and Seminars for Clients: As organizations, the introduction of editing as a course of study in US will give them the opportunity to hold editing boot camps, workshops, seminars and conferences for the purpose of sharing knowledge and ideas. The practice will promote better writing and editing skills, as well the production of books of high quality and relevance.

DEVELOPING EDITING SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LIS IN NIGERIA

The demand for editors and the rise in graduate unemployment in Nigeria, among other factors, makes it necessary to develop the knowledge, abilities and skills of students of English Language and LIS to embrace the editing profession even when they are fully employed or completely unemployed. This is because editing as a profession has the following benefits; Provides Source of Income: For graduates of English Language and US, editing as a profession provides an opportunity for them to be gainfully employed. Many research students, writers and

organizations are in need of editors to fix the errors in their works. The demand has created an opportunity for editors to witness stream of income where they commercialize their services.

Builds Students' and Graduates' Creativity: Editing manuscripts build the creativity of the editors. As the editors work on different editing tasks, they build their knowledge, skills and ability. They are more likely to become profitable writers themselves.

Boosts Written and Communicative Abilities of Students or Graduates: Practice, as they say, makes perfect. Indeed, working on dozens of editing tasks boosts the spoken and written abilities of the students or graduates. This is because constantly working on drafts helps the editors acquire new vocabulary and more novel ways of expressing themselves.

Offers Opportunities for Collaboration: Working as editors offer the graduates the opportunity to work with colleagues, friends and clients on collaborative assignments, such as writing, research goals, and shared editing assignments, among others. The opportunity created by such collaboration engenders positive spirit and common good.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussion, the paper raises critical issues about editing and editing services. The paper contends that editing should be promoted as another means through which graduates of English Language and LIS can become gainfully self-employed at the end of their studies. Where the graduates are already employed, they can offer paid freelance editing services to clients, students, researchers, among others. The income they raise from these services can be used to pay bills or augment their sources of income. For institutions offering LIS, the introduction of editing as a course of study will help to build the knowledge, ability and skills of the graduates on the rudiments of editing manuscripts. Library professionals, like graduates of

English Language, all work in the information system, and embracing editing as additional professional toolkit is an added advantage. In public libraries, especially academic libraries, the introduction of an editing services unit will ease the quest of many library patrons or clientele who wish to write or publish their works. At the moment, public or academic libraries do not perceive this as part of their responsibility, and members of the public who approach them for mentorship or guidance may not get the best. The inability of public libraries to take advantage of the gains of editing has made them to be mere collectors of library stocks, but less in a position to detect or contribute to determining the fitness of manuscripts which later found their way into the libraries as published works,

SUGGESTIONS

In view of the prevailing issues highlighted and discussed in this paper, it is important to adopt the following suggestions:

1. Editing as a practice and profession should be made as a basic course of study within the curriculum of LIS at the university so as to impart the craft of editing in the students and graduates of English Language and LIS.
2. Public libraries should create editing services units within their libraries to be in charge of offering professional editing services to authors, writers or library clients who have manuscripts for editing.
3. Graduates of English Language and LIS who are employed or not employed should offer editing services to enhance their income.

4. The departments should regularly hold workshops, conferences and seminars where the graduates, students and other professionals can attend to sharpen their editing skills.

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