

Politics in the indigenization of library and information services: The way forward for East Africa

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Abstract

This paper puts forward a case for the indigenization of LIS in the East African region. The paper recognizes that the politics of LIS in East African Region is influenced by both the global developments, agendas and goals in LIS (including World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and IFLA), and the political and socio-economic environment of the indigenous society. This article emphasizes the need for the LIS profession to redefine itself in addressing the global needs in a knowledge society. This requires international cooperation and networking and a well defined educational, research and development programme. For this to work within the East African economic and political blocks requires that a supportive environment is nurtured by the East African Community and the member countries.

Keywords

library and information services, indigenization, contextualization, politics, professional associations, cooperation, East Africa

East African countries need to engage their library and information institutions and associations in promoting democracy, patriotism, human rights and good governance if they are to fulfil their critical roles in developing an informed society.

Introduction

Through the years, developments such as industrialization and globalization have been associated with invention (Smith, 1978). These global developments have created a demand for LIS to address challenges in the knowledge society. Library and Information Services (LIS) are a valuable asset for attaining and sustaining rapid socio-economic advancement in such a knowledge society. The knowledge society has been characterized by an information revolution, a digital divide, and intellectual capital, in which knowledge has become a major creative force. The driving force for the transformation of society includes the changing concerns and attitudes, government policy changes, the increasing use of technologies, the increasing globalization of the economy, and increased levels of democracy in the knowledge society. Democracies are political systems characterized

by popular participation, representing human rights and freedom for all, especially in the internationalization of services (Aman, 2006).

The world ‘politics’ comes from the Greek word ‘polis’, meaning a ‘state’ or ‘community’ as a whole, which connotes the creation of the ideal society – a better society than the current one. Politics involves the competition for power, authority and influence in supporting the quality of life a society desires (Escada, 2008). This is in line with the four principles that UNESCO advances in advocating a move “from an information society to a knowledge society”

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(UNESCO, 2002: 22), which are: cultural diversity, equal access to education, universal access to information, and freedom of expression. Such principles provide benchmarks to countries or nations in working towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015, aiming at reducing extreme poverty, hunger, disease and lack of adequate shelter, while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.

Indeed, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005 has significantly influenced the information sector in the whole world. WSIS recognizes that access to information and knowledge is a key principle in the creation of an information society for all (WSIS, 2005). This is premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), whose Article 19 states that ‘everybody has the right to freedom of opinion and expression’ (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2003). In fact, to ensure access to information and strengthening of global knowledge for development, WSIS declared, among others, the following desires:

- Removing barriers to equitable access to information for economic, social, political, health, cultural, educational, and scientific activities and by facilitating access to public-domain information, including by universal design and the use of assistive technologies.
- Striving to promote universal access to and dissemination of scientific knowledge and technical information.
- Providing a dynamic and enabling international environment for investment, transfer of technology, and international cooperation in national development efforts related to ICTs, including improving global connectivity and making it more affordable.
- According high priority to building an inclusive information society by paying particular attention to the diversity of creative work and giving due recognition to the rights of authors and artists.
- Promoting the preservation of cultural heritage as a crucial component of the identity and self-understanding of individuals that links a community to its past and the common heritage of humankind.
- Assisting in bridging the digital divide, international and regional cooperation, standards development and the dissemination of information,

which are crucial for building the information society.

- Encouraging innovation and creativity through the protection of intellectual property without losing focus through wide dissemination, diffusion, and sharing of knowledge.
- Enabling the creation of an environment for worldwide access to services regardless of technology by ensuring international standardization as one of the essential building blocks of the information society.

These desires have created the politics of the need for increased networking and compliance to international standards through building sustainable economic and political blocks as a motivator for promoting the indigenous forms of access to information and dissemination of knowledge. Thus internalization and indigenization are the dialectical processes of knowledge transfer (Yan, 2005). Indigenization can best be understood as one aspect of the re-contextualization process. Basil Bernstein’s theory contends that “re-contextualization is a political process” that helps to understand the politics of indigenization (Bernstein, 2000). Many authorities, including Bernstein, indicate that the actual process of indigenization is the means by which an important discourse is filtered and grounded to address the social forces that may affect this process. According to Cheung (2006) a discourse involves politics and “power relations between different social forces, with each of them trying to control the production and reproduction of the dominant social configuration of the discourse which is to be re-contextualized into the local context”. Thus, the politics of the indigenization of LIS gives rise to the need to address the local environment in the discourse of the knowledge society. It is concerned with power and with applying an understanding of power to the management of information services appropriately and in a timely manner (Strassmann, 1994) within a given environment (e.g. the East African region). For the purposes of this paper, politics of indigenization relates to the developments and prospects of the expansion of the information industry by addressing the needs of the global knowledge society within the East African environment.

Knowledge society needs (desires) are crucial for transforming the resources we have into things we need (within the indigenous environment) in the most optimum way possible to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Mchombu, 2006:12).

There is, therefore, a need to draw up strategies for integrating different global or international and indigenous needs and resources within a particular discourse in a defined environment. A key requirement for the development of the East African region is the redrawing of the LIS roadmap through assessing the socio-economic and political needs within the economy, such as the social role of LIS professionals and the LIS professional leadership development programme. The major question is how the LIS global desires should be contextualized within the local or indigenous environments of East Africa. The specific discourse this paper tries to answer is:

- What are the socio-economic and political forces in the East African region?
- What are some of the attempts in the East African region in the indigenization of LIS?
- What are the strategies for addressing the politics of indigenization of LIS in the East African region?

The socio-economic and political environment in the East African region

In Africa, the political, social and economic climate has been rapidly evolving towards support of strategic cooperation development programmes to cope with the dynamic and changing world. This has consistently affirmed the desire by African leaders to establish close economic relations among their countries (Kabbaj, 2003: 69). For instance, the African Union (AU) was inaugurated at a Summit of All African Heads of State and Governments in Durban, South Africa in July 2002 (African Union, 2003). This strategy is devolved from the long-term aim of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) to eradicate poverty and to put African countries on a path of sustainable growth and development, whose objectives, among others, are to ensure that countries achieve the agreed international MDGs. NEPAD is a pledge by African leaders based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries on a sustainable path to growth and development (New Partnership for Africa's Development, 2001). In order to establish strong trade and economic relations, African countries, including those of the East African region, have established a number of sub-regional economic communities in the areas of enhancing intra-regional trade, monetary integration,

the development of common infrastructural services, and promoting the mobility of factors of production. The regional communities have a responsibility to spearhead continental integration and to eliminate poverty (Mukasa and Mugisha, 2008). Indeed, to enhance integration, Article 102 (h) (2002) of the East African Community Treaty fosters cooperation in the exchange of information regarding educational systems and Article 103 identifies science and technology as priority areas for regional cooperation. It is the aim of the community to provide a mechanism for suitable arrangements to coordinate technological and scientific information.

Further integration has been observed of late in the formation of the East African Community (EAC) into tripartite blocks with the Common Markets of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (Mugisha, 2008). The new tripartite free trade blocks and customs union of 26 African countries are hoped to reduce the cost of doing business for Africans and encourage foreign direct investment. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Indeed, the tripartite summit held in Kampala in October 2008 between EAC, SADC and COMESA discussed arrangements and infrastructural development aimed at harmonizing commerce in the region and providing a panacea for the continent's underdevelopment (Ministry of East African Community Affairs, 2008). Indeed, this is one of the WSIS declared desires that requires the indigenization of standards to enable effective sharing and use of information in the region. Some attempts at East African cooperation in areas of resource-sharing have been made, such as the establishment of the East African Business Council (EABC), the Association of Professional Societies of East Africa (APSEA), the East Africa Book Development Association (EABDA) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA). The challenge for the LIS sector is to take advantage of the existing political and economic frameworks to ensure the contextualization of the knowledge society desires in the East African region.

Politics of indigenization of the LIS in the East African region

Library and information services can be promoted by embracing international standards through professional bodies that guide the profession.

Table 1. Description of tripartite blocks of the COMESA, SADC and EAC

| Description | Details |
|--|---|
| Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) | The regional governmental organization with 15 countries that promotes collaboration, economic integration and technical cooperation throughout Southern Africa |
| The Common Markets of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) | The Treaty was signed on 5 November 1993 in Kampala, Uganda and was ratified a year later in Lilongwe, Malawi on 8 December 1994. COMESA replaced the former Preferential Trade Area (PTA). |
| The East African Community (EAC) | The countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda revived the East African Community in 1997, which aims at achieving a people-centred, market-driven and private sector-led development initiative. These countries were joined by Rwanda and Burundi in 2007. |

The role of IFLA in indigenization of LIS

Like in any other region of Africa, LIS in East Africa is guided by the principles and professional guidelines offered by the International Federation of Library and Information Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (IFLA, 2007). IFLA is an independent, international, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization. It supports the three IFLA pillars: Profession, Society and Members (IFLA Africa Section, 2006). IFLA has attempted to promote standards of provision and delivery of library and information services, to encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library and information services and to represent the interests of its members throughout the world. Like the WSIS commitments, IFLA embraces the principles of freedom of access to information and the freedom of expression embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. IFLA plays its politics through its various sections and committees to ensure that its objectives and missions are achieved. For instance, IFLA acts as a global watchdog for the development of the LIS profession. Similarly, the International Council of Archives' (ICA) professional committees and working groups engage the contribution of experts to the solution of specific problems, and develop international standards and best practice guidelines for records and archives. IFLA has also worked through other associations, such as the Commonwealth Library Association (COMLA) and the Standing Conference for Eastern, Central and Southern African Librarians (SCECSAL) to nurture LIS professional activities as an important component of the development process in various regions, including East Africa.

IFLA has also participated in the development and enhancement of policies, legislations and protocols in information science, including the IFLA Internet

Manifesto (IFLA, 2002a), the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (IFLA, 1998), the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto (IFLA, 2005) and the Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom (IFLA, 2002b), which have advocated LIS development in Africa as well as other regions. However, there are efforts under way to develop strategies for the indigenization of these developments in the EA region. Through the IFLA Advancement of Librarianship in Developing Countries (ALP) Programme) and IFLA African Section, there have been some attempts by IFLA to support various programmes in the East Africa region tailored for professional development, intellectual property rights management, resource-sharing, promotion of literacy for libraries, and strengthening of library associations, among others. For instance, with support from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), IFLA has supported library services on the African continent, including East Africa, in the areas of consortium-building for university and public libraries, access to information, research and development, education and training. All these efforts require strategies for indigenization in the East African environment.

Developments in the Indigenization of LIS in East Africa

A number of attempts have been made to address the global knowledge society desires in the context of the East African region. Table 2 below is a chronological list of some of the attempts at indigenizing LIS in the region.

Table 2. Developments in an attempt of Indigenization of LIS in East Africa.

| Time/period | Activity/event | Description |
|----------------------|--|---|
| 1948 | The East African Literature Bureau (EALB) was established under the East African High Commission to provide public libraries. | The Bureau started with publishing books in local languages and establishing library services. The British Council established its offices in Nairobi and took the responsibility of inaugurating library services in East Africa with a view to handing them over to the individual countries. The EALB was used as a springboard for library development with assistance from UNESCO. |
| 1957 | Library personnel and professionals from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zanzibar held a meeting at the Macmillan Library in Nairobi, Kenya and formed the East African Library Association (EALA). | The aim of the Association was to enable LIS personnel to share ideas and forge a common platform for meeting challenges facing the profession, including training, public relations, advocacy and resource-sharing. |
| 1960 | Mr S.W. Hockey was appointed to work out a library development plan for the three territories. | Hockey's report recommended a national four-tier system comprising central headquarters, regional libraries, district libraries and postal library service. This led to the expansion of public library services. |
| 1963 | The establishment of the first Library Training School in East Africa, the East African School of Librarianship (EASL), at Makerere University in Kampala | Considering that expansion of libraries without provision of necessary training would not be a wise policy, S.W Hockey, the Libraries Organiser in East Africa, proposed a regional library training centre for the three territories. |
| 1972 | Owing to the existing political conditions in the East African region, in 1972 the EALA was dissolved. However, national associations in the respective countries were formed to work as closely as possible with their local professionals and focus on the indigenous and national developments and achievements. | Each of the three countries formed individual country associations, set up the Library Associations i.e. Uganda Library Association (ULA) now called Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA), Kenya, the Kenya Library Association (KLA), and Tanzania, the Tanzania Library Association (TLA). At the same time, the three associations declared a desire to come together once every two years to exchange ideas on possible areas of cooperation and the development of the profession and services and thus formed a standing conference that would alternate in the three countries. |
| From 1974 to present | The Standing Conference has expanded to other regions and is now known as the Standing Conference for Eastern, Central and Southern African Librarians (SCECSAL). The aim of SCECSAL is to provide a forum through which members of the library and information profession in the region meet to discuss issues of mutual interest | This is done through establishing and strengthening professionalism in all the countries of the region and promoting regional and international understanding and co-operation in the library and information profession. In addition, other networks have been formed, including the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (SCANUL-ECS). This has been running concurrently with SCECSAL |
| 1998 | At the SCECSAL XIII in 1998 in Nairobi, Kenya, it was resolved that "we delegates attending SCECSAL XIII recognize the efforts of the citizens and governments of East Africa to revive the EAC". | The resolution further states: "We urge therefore the national associations in East Africa to have a chapter/article in the EA Co-operation Treaty on the information industry". |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

| Time/ period | Activity/event | Description |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| 27–29 November 2000 | The annual conference of the Kenya Library Association (KLA) on the theme “Information Age: Challenges for Kenya” that took place on 29 November 2000 resolved to take up the SCECSAL resolution. | KLA organized a meeting of executive members from EA countries with Rwanda and Ethiopia as observers. In that meeting it was realized that the politics of East African countries had moved closer to regional cooperation and agreed to work on the revitalization of the East African Library Association. |
| April 2002 | The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) as a host of SCECSAL in 2002 proposed the establishment of a SCECSAL secretariat, which was not favoured by most of the member associations. | This was re-echoed in 2004 in Kampala and the chair (ULA) was given a mandate to draft a proposal at the next SCECSAL 2006 in Dar-es-Salaam. |
| 10–11 December 2003 | With support from IFLA and the East African Community Secretariat, a workshop on revitalization of the EALA was held at the Secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania. | The main objective of the workshop was to bring together librarians and information workers in East Africa to deliberate on ways and means of cooperating and networking in the provision of the required information to support the regional integration of the East African countries. |
| July 2004 | The developments that followed were that ULIA prepared the constitution as was requested and copies were given to KLA and TLA and it was required that KLA takes on its role to chair the revitalization of the EALA. | A follow-up meeting was expected to be held in July 2004 during SCECSAL. This could not materialize due to the fact that TLA failed to agree with the rest of the associations on the methodology of the cooperation. |
| July 2006 | A proposal was presented to the SCECSAL General Assembly by ULIA (2006) at the SCECSAL XVII in Tanzania indicating formation of a Council with a representation of member countries. | The Council would be charged with the duty of formulating the general policy, evaluating the performance, coordinating with sister organizations, and executing decisions and resolutions. The Executive Secretary should be responsible for the SCECSAL Secretariat, which runs the day-to-day activities of the organization. |
| July 2006 | TLA came out with the other alternative options: To reconfigure IFLA into a Regional Federation of Library and Information Associations and Institutions (RFLIAI) and a Congress of Library and Information Associations and Institutions (ECSA) | The two options were presented to SCECSAL XVII together with the ULA proposal as mandated by SCECSAL XVI. Neither of the options was agreed upon. Instead, the issue was referred to the next SCECSAL XVIII that was to be hosted by Zambia in 2008. |

Sources: Ikoja-Odongo (2003: 4); Magara (2003); Birungi (2000: 64); Weche (2003: 26); ULIA File Records, SCECSAL Proceedings.

Observations

It can be observed from Table 2 that a number of LIS associations have contributed to the indigenization of LIS services, ranging from the East African Library Associations (Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA), Kenya Library Association (KLA), and Tanzania Library Association (TLA), to SCECSAL and IFLA. Such a number of activities enable professionals to get together through sharing of information and networking to address the issues regarding the LIS profession in the region (Magara, 2003). Indeed, the East

African library associations have been working together in various areas, including publications, conferences and workshops. The areas addressed by the library associations include improving the standards of library and information services and the status of the library profession, encouraging the promotion, establishment and improvement of the library, library services and book production to meet indigenous needs, and promoting LIS education in the region. Furthermore, there is a need to recognize the new tripartite economic blocks of COMESA, SADC and EAC. Although SCECSAL seems to be covering the tripartite blocks, no

appropriate strategies are in place to indigenize the LIS in the respective economic blocks. Even then, no strategy has been put in place for the East African library associations.

Despite the pledges by most of the LIS associations in the region to build capacity by promoting the education and training of library and information professionals, little effort has been made to develop guidelines for the indigenization of LIS in the region. For instance, apart from the Standing Conference and the General Assembly that take place after every two years, there appears to be no other activity being undertaken in the East African region to promote LIS education and training in the region. However, some efforts were made during the SCECSAL 2004 in Kampala with support from IFLA, INASP and IDRC, involving staff from library and information science training schools in East, Central and Southern Africa, who met and established a network called Library and Information Science Network for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (LISNET-ECS). An Interim Committee was elected to develop guidelines, harmonize what had been discussed at the meeting, and undertake publicity and advocacy for the enhancement of the LIS curriculum and training in the region. No extra effort has been made to work on the indigenization of the LIS education and curriculum and no roadmap is in place for the implementation of LISNET-ECS.

Reflecting on the integration of the East African region, one would ask, where is LIS in this political movement? On a number of occasions, members of the library associations in East Africa, including ULIA, KLA and TLA, have advocated a body to take on the role of advocating the major policies that should influence decisions in LIS affairs in the region. A number of meetings have been held, and proposals for the cooperation have been prepared and discussed. For instance, in December 2003, at the EAC, the Library and Information Associations of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda mutually resolved to cooperate to fulfil regional development in the areas of LIS education and training, research and publication, developing and harmonizing a LIS code of ethics, harmonizing standards, legislation and advocacy, resource-sharing, and supporting the socio-economic activities of the East African Community. The resolution on the Declaration of Intent was signed by Charles Nandain of KLA, Dr Ali Mcharazo of TLA and Dr Elisam Magara of ULIA on 12 December 2003. Although the Declaration of Intent was signed,

there were two schools of thought on the mode of cooperation. Whereas KLA and ULIA agreed on cooperation through the transformation of the East African Library Association (EALA) into the Federation of East African Library and Information Associations (FEALIA), the TLA position was that the cooperation can be established through establishing a structure within the East African Community Secretariat. However, no appropriate strategies were provided by either side to guide the development of such cooperation.

The revitalization of the EALA requires a thorough analysis to avoid conflict with the existing bodies, including SCECSAL. It is also important to integrate the desires of SADC, COMESA and EAC into the re-contextualization of LIS services in the region. Developing a roadmap for this discourse is important for guiding the indigenization of LIS in the East African region.

Conclusion

Library and information services are essential for the functioning of a healthy and democratic society and developing a well-informed citizenry. In East Africa, there does not seem to be anyone responsible for ensuring the indigenization of LIS in the region. Although attempts have been made by SCECSAL and IFLA's Africa Section to provide support to indigenization strategies, their coverage relies a great deal on supporting networking with some concern for professional development, the development of standards, monitoring and harmonization of LIS activities and services including curriculum development and education, and promoting innovation, research and access to and dissemination of information and knowledge. Political intervention through institutional pressures, advocacy, attitudes and incentives among officials, and power relations, among others, has had a significant impact on the indigenization of LIS in the region. Indeed, politics and policy-making are inseparable from external, socio-economic, cultural and political influences as generated by the indigenous environment. Whereas the EAC realizes the importance of exchange of information regarding educational systems and identifies science and technology as priority areas for regional cooperation, there is no central strategy by the LIS profession that would enable the effective coordination and promotion of LIS services and their integration in the region. The absence of such a strategy has limited LIS services and their

indigenization in the region. This calls for the drawing up of strategies for guiding the use and implementation of international LIS standards by intervening in strategic areas affecting the LIS profession. That notwithstanding, there is a need for guidelines to promote and advocate the rationalization and indigenization of the protocols, agreements and policies developed and signed at the international, continent and regional levels to meet the LIS services in the East African region.

The way forward for indigenization of LIS in East Africa

The following are recommendations and strategies for managing the politics of indigenization of the LIS in the East African region.

The LIS profession

The LIS professionals in the region should develop a common voice in advocacy and lobbying for policies that affect LIS as a fundamental requirement for the EA region. LIS associations in the region should put forward the concept of the revitalization of the East African Library Association to address the EAC desires. The areas of cooperation envisaged in 2003, including LIS education and training, research and publication, developing and harmonizing a LIS code of ethics and standards, legislation and advocacy, resource-sharing, and supporting the socio-economic activities of the East African Community are still relevant and require urgent attention. For instance, LIS professional associations should develop a common professional code of ethics and standards to strengthen the LIS services in the region. In addition, LIS professionals should work with communities in partnership with other service providers to enhance the active socio-economic and political struggles of people within their respective countries in the promotion of the information industry in the region.

This is already being witnessed with the East African Book Development Association (EABDA), where library associations are working together with publishers, writers and authors and civil society organizations to promote LIS services in the East African region. Such partners could help member libraries extend their reach, build support and expand participation in development projects underway in their countries. This requires LIS associations to develop targeted plans by linking their professional associations' plans with those of the sector development programmes to address cross-cutting initiatives. There is

also a need for library associations to draw up action plans targeting respective governments and the East African community agenda to ensure full integration of LIS services in the region. Furthermore, library associations need to become stakeholders in the policy arena, influencing decision-makers, the media, and the public. This will require a forum for the LIS associations in East Africa in which they can speak with one voice in order to be able to affect policy and public awareness.

International cooperation and networking

It is a fact that the success of any profession depends much on the success of other networks and cooperation with them. Therefore the East African library associations should take advantage of the existing services and opportunities offered by other LIS professional bodies, such as IFLA, COMLA and SCECSAL. Cooperation and networking is no longer an option but a necessity, especially in the information age. Indigenizing and strengthening of library and information associations in East Africa must find new avenues, not only for advancing cooperation, but also for expanding the associations' programmes to meet the needs of the communities. In accordance with the adage "charity begins at home", it makes a great deal of sense to show some commitment and cooperative arrangements in the region. However, meeting the needs of indigenous communities requires the decentralization of services, as this would ensure that they get closer to the grass roots. This requires close interaction with and intimate understanding of indigenous needs with regard to coverage and approach. This is likely to enable communities to appreciate the need for cooperation. This requires consolidating the existing opportunities and progress to address local indigenous problems.

The recognition that information provides a competitive advantage applies to individual organizations as well as international ones. Thus international organizations like IFLA, COMLA and SCECSAL should take advantage of international programmes and organizations like WSIS, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), and the African Information Society Initiative to enable national LIS associations to cope in the globalization era. For example, bridging development gaps with support from WIPO will enable individual libraries and professionals to promote the free flow of information at the same time as they protect intellectual property rights within the

framework of World Trade Organisation (WTO) and WIPO treaties and agreements. However, indigenous influence on policy-making in LIS is crucial for linking research, learning, thinking and the media, advocacy and networking to local needs. Furthermore, the efforts currently being made by IFLA, COMLA and SCECSAL in the East African region need to be harmonized. This should be done through finalizing the current debate on the rationalization of SCECSAL with regard to governance, its secretariat, and its being related with the proposed revitalization of the East African Library Association.

Education, research and development

There is a need for promoting education and research, and creating human capital in LIS. This requires the capacity for developing collaborative research, the harmonization of the LIS curriculum, enhancing research and development (R & D), and promoting publications on LIS in the region. For instance, the development of an East Africa LIS research agenda that could culminate in the establishment of an East African Library and Information Research journal or review would fit into such an agenda. Furthermore, research and development in the new models of development to support the public domain, copyright and protection of intellectual property, open access and open source software and to bridge the digital divide require contextualization in addressing indigenous East African needs. In addition, given the importance of indigenization of the curriculum, there is a need to link the indigenization of curricula with research and publishing outputs to contribute to the ongoing debate in the knowledge society and encourage feedback in the LIS sector as a means of enhancing quality assurance in the region. The LIS training institutions should utilize the existence of national councils for higher education in their respective countries and the Inter-University Council for East Africa to foster a robust indigenous research and development mentorship scheme and a staff exchange programme aimed at benefiting LIS departments and academia. This will promote self-evaluation of the curriculum and openness among the LIS training institutions, a situation that will promote the LIS sector in the region.

The East African Community and member countries

There is a need for the East African Community to work closely with national governments and

international organizations in coordinating programmes that could benefit library and information services in the East African region. This will help the network of professionals in the region to promote the teaching, research and development of LIS. The East African Community, too, should invest in promoting standards and codes of ethics in the course of professional development, including LIS. Coordination of LIS in East Africa has the potential to promote information-sharing and use in the region. For instance, the East African Community should explore the possibility of an initiative to establish an East African information gateway to fast-track the integration developments in LIS.

The vision of regional integration in the knowledge era is to create wealth, raise the living standards of the people of East Africa and enhance international competitiveness in the region. In the era of globalization, nations need consultative, strategic alliances and a common vision to attract funding and support. Furthermore, there is a need for member countries to address the politics of needs and resources by utilizing existing networks, including library associations. For instance, member countries of East Africa could utilize the associations to promote the harmonization of policy frameworks, synchronize standards and pool efforts in the exchange of information on research and development in LIS activities. Member countries should also engage LIS institutions and professional associations in promoting democracy, patriotism, human rights and good governance if they are to fulfil their critical roles in developing an informed society.

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