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Vera Ngozi Okonoko

University of Delta Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria, eromoserecon@yahoo.com

Ndasaliu Usman Abubakar

Ibrahim Badamasi Banbagida University Library Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria, eromoserecon@yahoo.com

Unwana Isaac Udoh

Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria, unwanaudoh6@gmail.com

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Employability skills of library and information science (LIS) graduates as determinant for employment in university libraries in some selected university libraries in Nigeria

Okonoko Vera Ngozi Ph.D

University of Delta Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria
vera.okonoko@unidel.edu.ng

Usman Ndasaliu Abubakar Ph.D

Ibrahim Badamasi Banbagida University Library Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria
eromoserecon@yahoo.com

Unwana Isaac Udoh Ph.D

Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria
unwanaudoh6@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated employability skills of library and information science (LIS) graduates as determinant for employment in university libraries in some selected university libraries in Nigeria. This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of 6 heads of university libraries in South- South and South East, Nigeria. A self constructed questionnaire was used for the study. A total of 6 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved using descriptive statistics mean and percentage mean score of 2.5 and above and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable. The study revealed that four employability skills required from LIS graduates for employment in the university libraries under study as critical thinking, creativity and imagination, communication and information management and willingness to learn. The study also shows the leaning methods students will find most helpful in facilitating relevant knowledge for employment as industrial training, campus debates, summer internship and part-time work. four (4) factors that affect employability skills of new LIS graduates includes the following as most of them unaware of the skills required by the labor market, inflate and underestimate their employability skills, lack of self development while in school, and inability to learn practical's during industrial training. The study recommends that LIS students should ensure that they utilize the period of industrial training to develop the skills needed for employment, LIS students should develop themselves while in school and seek for part time jobs during summer holidays and LIS students should ensure they participate in campus activities such as debates and any other critical competitions in that would spur them to develop their employability skills respectively.

Keywords: Employability skills, LIS Graduates, Employment, University libraries

Introduction

Since the growth of a university library is heavily dependent on recent library school graduates, every library seeks to employ LIS graduates who have strong academic backgrounds, professional expertise, competence, and a service mentality, among other qualities. This is due to the fact that in this age of globalization university libraries must prosper and effectively compete in the global market. Employers must thus concentrate on advocating and putting into practice proper methods in employing LIS graduates. The productivity of an organization's employees directly affects the success of a university library. Failures in work can lead to underachievement. Therefore, it is crucial that university libraries choose LIS graduates who

possess the traits necessary for ongoing success in this cutthroat global community. Employers could examine candidates' employability skills before deciding whether to employ them as one strategy for achieving this accomplishment.

Employability skills are a set of accomplishments that LIS graduates develop to increase their likelihood of finding employment and succeeding in their chosen profession, benefiting themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy (Yorke, 2004). Cranmer (2006) defines employability skills as improvements that help graduates find jobs when they enter the workforce prepared for work. According to Boden and Nedeva (2010), graduate employability is the degree of growth and fostered skills that make graduates prepared for the workforce. Employers often choose graduates with job-ready abilities over discipline-specific knowledge that can successfully encourage communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem-solving, logical and independent thought, communication and information management skills, intellectual rigor, creativity and imagination, ethical practice, integrity, and tolerance are among the qualities that Smith and Bath (2006) see as a combination of qualities that could lead to employment. An employment contract states the specific services that an employee will do for an employer. Jovanovic (2004) described employment as a process of engaging an employee for a job. Employment is also defined by Costello (2006) as the collection of actions and procedures required to lawfully employ an adequate number of competent librarians at the appropriate location.

Despite the widespread recognition of the significance of employability skills for recent graduates' long-term prospects, a sizable portion of LIS undergraduate students do not make an effort or take use of all the options available to them to build these abilities while in school (Scott et al. 2019). According to MacDermott and Ortiz (2017), some students aren't even aware of

how important employability skills are while in school. Students can overestimate and underestimate their employability abilities since they are unaware of the talents that employers are looking for (Gawrycka et al. 2020; Wallis 2021). Employers in Vietnam were unsatisfied with graduates' employability attributes throughout employment, according to a study (Tran 2017), and graduating students had a limited awareness of the true demands of the labor market. It is in light of this that this title employability skills of library and information science (LIS) graduates as determinant for employment in university libraries in some selected university libraries in Nigeria is imperative.

Statement of the problem

Graduates of library and information science (LIS) are more likely to find their first jobs and succeed in their chosen careers if they possess a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and traits called employability skills. This empowers them to become critical and reflective lifelong learners who are adaptable and flexible throughout their careers, to the benefit of themselves, their employers, the community, and the larger economy. Students in LIS can improve their employability skills by taking on more responsibility. They must first become acutely aware of how crucial employability skills are to their chances of finding work in the future. Second, students need to actively make use of the possibilities that are available to them to develop employability skills through a variety of means, including campus discussions, part-time jobs, summer internships, industrial visits, and good use of the resources provided by university career offices. The researcher has seen that LIS graduates with strong employability skills had an easier time adjusting to and succeeding in their numerous new employment environments. However, graduate unemployment and underemployment in libraries have been

partially attributed to new graduates' lack of employability skills. Therefore, this study is being carried out to undertake to fix the mistakes made by past LIS graduates.

Research objectives

To achieve the above stated research objective, three research questions were developed for the study. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out certain employability skills required from LIS graduates for employment in your institution
2. To find out which learning methods LIS students will find most helpful in facilitating relevant knowledge and employability skills by LIS graduates
3. To find out the factors that affect employability skills of new LIS graduates

Literature review

A person's employability is a collection of abilities, knowledge, and character traits that help them adjust to changes in the labor market. In the present era of technological disruption and globalization, employability skills are essential. The lack of skills among the workforce is a complaint from the employers. In developing nations, there are over 75 million young people without jobs, and in most of these nations, youth unemployment rates are two to four times greater than adult unemployment rates. In order to make students productive and employable by the industry, education providers must also equip them with information and abilities, either soft or hard talents, relevant to the workplace. In addition to technical expertise, businesses want candidates with certain communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking capabilities. More than 50% of stakeholders were unable to match job seekers' skills to the openings they posted, leaving more than 80% of applicants without employment.

Oraison, Konjarski, and Howe (2019) claim that the graduate attributes of the educational institution are made to reflect student outcomes when evaluating their capacity for 21st-century professional skills and capabilities, keeping in mind the profession and the industry's professional standards. As a result, graduate characteristics should take into account both the certification standards' criteria and market demands. To that purpose, these qualities stand in for the academic and general abilities necessary for efficient functioning in a particular industry. Employability is a type of work-specific active adaptability that helps people to recognize and seize professional chances, (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004). Students understanding their professional purpose in employability are referred to by Bates et al. (2019) as work-specific adaptability. According to Kinash, Crane, Judd, and Knight (2016), universities need to strike a balance between the present curricula's emphasis on disciplinary knowledge and transdisciplinary and transferable abilities that aid students in adapting to the demands of their working lives. Research, however, indicates that the present focus on skill development to improve graduate employability is too limited and insufficient to fully capture the complexity of educating students to be purpose-focused in their working lives (Clark, Zucas, & Lent, 2011; Jackson, 2016).

It is evident that the idea of employability has changed throughout time, shifting from an emphasis on the ability to get one's first job to a focus on the talents and skills that help workers manage throughout their careers. According to Rosenbaum (2012), if students don't acquire fundamental employability skills before starting a job, they might not be able to do so after they start working. Training and development should be viewed as an investment in a sustainable future rather than a burden expense since companies is reluctant to spend money on it after employment (Knig et al., 2016). This gap can be partially addressed by academic mobility if it

intends to boost employability via the development of professional skills (Kabanbayeva et al., 2019); a similar impact can be obtained by student migration for educational purposes (Mishchuk et al., 2019). For instance, the Confederation of British Industry's 2008 poll in the UK found that 48% of businesses had trouble finding graduates with the required skills.

More than 60% of the 700 UK-based companies surveyed by Branine (2008) reported having concerns about the graduates' lack of employability skills.

According to Cumming (2010), a large number of graduates lack the necessary abilities, mindsets, and dispositions, which in turn prevents them from contributing productively in the workplace. It's interesting to note that little is known about the viewpoint of undergraduates, who are thought to be the target audience for employability development. According to the learning theory, an undergraduate's perspective is crucial. According to this notion, effective outcomes depend on motivation and participation with the process (Garavan, 2010). Similar to this, other studies asserted that the stakeholders in employability represented by higher education, employers, and students had divergent opinions on the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for employment.

Higher education students are not fully aware of employability skills and how it's perceived by stakeholders (Rae, 2007). As a result, there is a significant difference between the abilities and attributes valued by employers and higher education students (Kinash et al., 2016). According to the author, in order to overcome and close this gap, there needs to be collaboration among the stakeholders represented by higher education, employers, students, and graduates (Harvey & Shahjahan, 2013). According to Mainga et al. (2022; Sullivan and Ariss 2021), graduate career paths nowadays are likely to include significantly more frequent movement between occupations, companies, and even sectors. As they are adaptable to a variety of

occupations, professions, sectors, and situations, employability skills promote career mobility (Chamorro-Premuzic et al. 2010; Osmani et al. 2019; Sullivan and Ariss 2021). According to one research, today's graduates might go through up to 17 job transitions or changes during the course of their careers (Rae, 2007). In such a dynamic environment, career flexibility and capacity for lifelong learning are essential.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of 6 heads of university libraries in South- South and South East, Nigeria. Heads of libraries were chosen for the study because they are directly involved in employment of staff in the university libraries under study. A self constructed questionnaire was used for the study. A total of 6 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved using descriptive statistics mean and percentage mean score of 2.5 and above and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable.

Table 1

Population of the study

S/N	University libraries	Position	Number
1	Delta State University library Abraka	Head	1
2	University of Agbor library Delta State	Head	1
3	Maritime University, library Okerenkeko	Head	1
4	University of Nigeria, Nsukka library	Head	1
5	Nmandi Azikiwe Library	Head	1
6	Enugu State university library	Head	1

	Total		6
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Table 1 above show the population of the study which comprises of the various heads of the university libraries: Delta State University library Abraka (1), University of Agbor library Delta State, (1), Maritime University, library Okerenkeko (1), University of Nigeria, Nsukka library (1), Nnamdi Azikiwe university Library (1) and Enugu State university library (1) respectively.

Table 2

Employability skills required from LIS graduates for employment

Keys: Strongly agreed, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-x	Decision
1	Critical thinking	4	2	0	0	3.6	Accepted
2	Creativity and imagination	3	3	0	0	3.5	Accepted
3	Communication and information management	4	2	0	0	3.6	Accepted
4	Willingness to learn	4	2	0	0	3.6	Accepted

Table 2 above identified four (4) employability skills required from LIS graduates for employment in the university libraries under study: Critical thinking (3.6), creativity and imagination (3.5), communication and information management (3.6) and willingness to learn (3.6) respectively. This is line with Smith and Bath (2006) whom opined that graduates should consider the following employability skills for employment: Skills such as critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem-solving, logical and independent thought, communication and information management skills, intellectual rigour, creativity and imagination, ethical practice, integrity, and tolerance.

Table 3

Learning methods LIS students will find most helpful in facilitating relevant knowledge for employment

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-x	Decision
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1	Industrial training	5	1	0	0	3.8	Accepted
2	Campus debates	2	3	1	0	3.1	Accepted
3	Summer internships	3	2	1	0	3.3	Accepted
4	Part-time work	4	2	0	0	3.6	Accepted

Table 3 shows the leaning methods students will find most helpful in facilitating relevant knowledge for employment as industrial training (3.8), Campus debates (3.1), Summer internship (3.3) and part-time work (3.6) respectively.

Table 4

Factors that affect employability skills of new LIS graduates

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-x	Decision
1	Unaware of the skills required by the labor market	4	2	0	0	3.6	Accepted
2	Inflate and underestimate their employability skills	3	3	0	0	3.5	Accepted
3	Lack of self development while in school	3	2	1	0	3.3	Accepted
4	Inability to learn practical's during industrial training	3	2	1	0	3.3	Accepted

Table 4 indentified four (4) factors that affect employability skills of new LIS graduates as most of them unaware of the skills required by the labor market (3.6), inflate and underestimate their employability skills (3.5), lack of self development while in school (3.3), and inability to learn practical's during training (3.3) respectively. This is supported by MacDermott and Ortiz (2017) who opined that some students do not even realize the importance of soft/employability skills. As a result, students tend to both inflate and underestimate their employability skills (Gawrycka et al. 2020; Wallis 2021).

Conclusion

Employers, students, and instructors all have various roles to play in helping LIS students in developing employability skills while in school. As the most crucial employability qualities,

employers reward problem-solving abilities, learning abilities, a willingness to learn, as well as passion and intellect. Students anticipate that their university education will prepare them for their future careers, but they need take steps to increase their personal relevance and make sure that they have the necessary skills for employment. The LIS department has to understand how important it is for students to acquire the solid employability skills that employers want. On the other hand, higher education institutions cannot be expected to provide undergraduates with completely and fully developed skills for future employment. It is important to point out that teachers, employers and students should be equally responsible for skills development. In order to develop skills that employer's value highly, students need practical work training through internships among others in order to assist their students to build their own competitiveness.

Recommendations

The study recommended thus:

1. LIS students should ensure that they utilize the period of industrial training to develop the skills needed for employment
2. LIS students should develop themselves while in school and seek for part time jobs during summer holidays
3. LIS students should ensure they participate in campus activities such as debates and any other critical competitions in that would spur them to develop their employability skills

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