KIU Journal of Education (KJED)

Assessing the acquired skills for demand and employability in the job market: a tracer study of LIS graduates of Umaru Musa Yar'adua University in Katsina metropolis Nigeria

Ibrahim Nauwara Umar[1] & Fari Sani Abdu[2]* (PhD)

[1]**Department of Library and Information Science, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria.**
nauwaraiumar@gmail.com

[2]**Department of Library and Information Science, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria**
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2436-8518

*Corresponding Authors email: Sani.fari@umyu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study set out to assess the acquired skills of the graduates of library and information science of Umaru Musa Yar'adua University for demand and employability in the job market. The study objectives were to examine the demand of LIS graduates; identify the sectors employing them and to ascertain the challenges they face on the job. Employers of LIS graduates were targeted in Katsina metropolis. Total enumeration was used as the population within the study area was small and the data was gathered through field survey and literature review with the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered on the 120 identified graduates with a response rate of 98 which represent 81.70%, the quantitative data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26. Two null hypotheses were also tested at α =0.05 using Correlation. The findings shows that demand for LIS graduates was generally low; the sectors employing the LIS graduates were information centers, printing and publishing firms, non-governmental organizations among others; and the challenges faced by the LIS graduates on the job are problem solving and teamwork among others. The study recommends that there is need to extend the industrial training done by the LIS students to other sectors to boost their thinking capacity and relevance, also, more skills acquisition related courses be integrated in their curriculum to widen the scope of their expertise for competitive advantage.

Key words: Employability, LIS graduates, tracer study, job market, LIS acquired skills

1. Introduction

Historically, the Katsina State University was established in the year 2006 by the then democratically elected Government under the leadership of the late Governor Mallam Umar Musa Yar'adua, who later became the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The university started

academic activities in 2007 with only three Faculties. These included Faculties of Education, Natural and Applied Sciences and Humanities. In the year 2009, specifically in the month of March, the institution's name changed to Umaru Musa Yar'adua University. Under the Faculty of Education there were only two Departments then. These were Department of Education (taking all science-education and humanities-education courses under one department), and Department of Library and Information Science (LIS).

Therefore, the vision and mission of the Department of Library and Information Science are in line with the overall vision and mission of the University at large. Specifically, this department aims at training appropriate and competent manpower capable of handling the activities of information processing, storage and dissemination in our different types of libraries and other information centers. In addition, this department was to develop the capacity needed to handle the information needs and wants of the society in all ramifications.

In this regard, the quality of any graduate is essentially determined by educational program that he/she undergoes. This is because educational program add value to our society generally by developing entrepreneurially and competent graduates in all fields (Ojedokun & Moahi, 2005). It is believed that quality of higher institutions of learning determines the viability of every society in terms of manpower, equipping individuals with the necessary knowhow and skills acquisition required for positions of responsibilities, in governance, industry, academia, and other sectors of societal advancement (Haider, 2008 & Burnet, 2013). It is essential for any program of study to constantly evaluate its curriculum to ensure that the content remains relevant, of high quality and is in tune with the demand of the job market, and one of the ways institutions achieve this

is through tracer studies (Zainab, Edzan & Rahman 2004; Shongwe & Ocholla, 2011).

Academic programs are continuously evaluated so as to ascertain the quality, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of graduates' knowledge and on the job performance. It is a measure of academic value and increasingly considered to be an assessment technique through which manpower made available for employers and governments across the globe are on the right track. This trend opens up the leeway for advanced management positions in the knowledge economy. Through advanced studies and research in universities and other institutes, individuals develop themselves to occupy central position in their career and when sustained at university level, the overall standard is improved, thereby advancing prospects and opening up new windows for research and development (Top Universities, 2013).

A number of reasons bring about the zeal and motivation for advancing one's knowledge through earning degrees. These factors are subcategorized into four main areas, namely: self-development, career enhancement, career switching, and environmental factors (Teowkul, et al., 2009). Added, it was revealed in the study of Teowkul, et al., (2009) entitled Motivational Factors of Graduate Thai Students Pursuing Master and Doctoral Degrees in Business, that, Master's degree students expect to gain more compensation, to easily change jobs, and to smoothly transition into new careers.

In many countries of the world, the desire to acquire higher education is normally related to cultural values, where mostly, university education is given high esteem and recognition (Atchaoarena, 2009). The author further reports that there is the general belief among the citizenry that higher education is a means that assures one against unemployment and assures one a place in the civil service and even the private sector, thereby potentially guaranteeing economic future of the individuals. This economic rationale

coupled with the perceived prospect of relative higher wages earning, justifies why individuals venture into higher education and especially university degrees.

To provide a better insight about the relationship between university education and especially a minimum of first degree and the labour market, a handful of tracer studies (i.e studies of graduates in many countries) have been carried out to ascertain the relevance of university degrees in providing the necessary skills and expertise suitable for the job market. Ocholla (2001) reports that tracer studies are very vital assessment tools to training institutions, as the results could be used for change in the right direction and for better practices with regards to employability, effectiveness and curriculum review.

It is vital to keep track of individuals especially in a professional field to have the advantage of creating a database or record to know who is where and doing what, furthermore to be able to trace them for inquiries regarding their challenges in preparation for tomorrow and to serve as reference for studies and to enhance the development of the profession in future.

2. Purpose of the Study

The researcher is a graduate of Library and Information Science of Umaru Musa Yar'adua University and was actually admitted into the university to study a different course in the year 2012, but due to O/level deficiency was asked to switch to LIS. Many of the students as at then, who also, based on their personal convictions lamented that they were either transferred from other departments for the same reason or were directly admitted into the department despite the fact that they did not apply for the course. In essence, as at then, the course became an alternative for students who could not meet the requirements of the actual courses they applied for, or perhaps, a way of easing off admission

pressure on the university authorities. This also, could not be far from the reason that UMYU was the only state government owned university in the state, and there was high demand and subscription for university education.

Gradually over the years the table turned in favour of the course, with large numbers of applicants now applying directly to study the course, as observed by the researcher and evident from records of admission request, coupled with verbal narrations of many applicants seeking admission into the Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, making the course to become one of the most subscribed courses in the university. It is also observed based on record that the first graduate assistant of the university came from the department, and currently, LIS is believed to be, based on staff strength, one of the leading departments in terms of employment of staff who graduate from their departments in the university. The researchers being a student and staff in the department respectively observes that majority (about 65%) of the permanent teaching staff in the department graduated from the same department. The statistics could be higher if the Departmental staff are added to the staff working in the University Library, who also happens to be graduates of the UMYU LIS department.

Essentially, from observation, no tracer studies were conducted at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, especially as it relates to the Department of Library and Information Science. However, a handful of such effort is done in other universities and programs across Nigeria, Africa and other parts of the world as presented in literature review of this study, as such, that will form the basis of literature review for this study. Studies by Shongwe & Ocholla, (2011); Balingbin, (2014) and Alera, (2017) revealed that this type of study is very significant because it provides an avenue of knowing the relevance and employability of graduates, hence, the current study will do the

same on UMYU graduates. In the light of the above, this research was embarked upon

The general objective of the study is to ascertain the skills acquired by UMYU LIS graduates to ensure their demand and employability in the job market.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the demand and employability of UMYU LIS graduates in the job market
2. Identify the sectors employing UMYU LIS graduates
3. Determine the challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market

To achieve that, the following research questions ensued:

1. Are UMYU LIS graduates demanded and employed in the job market?
2. What are the sectors employing UMYU LIS graduates?
3. What are the challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market?

To ascertain the relationship between some of the research topic variables, the following hypotheses were tested:

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' skills and their demand in the job market.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' acquired skills and the challenges they face in the job market.

3. Methodology

This study employs the positivist paradigm as it provides for the researcher the ability to investigate the true picture of the situation in an objective manner. The reason is that the true position of the graduates of LIS from UMYU needs to be uncovered in order to solve the puzzle of the status of LIS

program few years back in comparison to the present status. The positivist paradigm explores reality based on the philosophical ideas of August Comte, a French philosopher. According to Comte, reasons and observations are the best ways to investigate and understand human behaviours. Paradigms influence the way and process through which research data is collected (method), it also informs the philosophy of the research (Bailey, 1987).

The survey research design is employed in this study because it gives advantage of studying a population using questionnaire and collecting data on the subjects for analysis and interpretations. Research design according to Powel & Connaway (2004) is a detailed plan adopted by the researcher to answer research questions. In other words, it is the blue print of the study. While Quantitative research method was adopted in this study. This is justifiable considering the fact that the study involves quantitative data collection from respondents, and this method is suitable for conducting research using positivist approach.

Total population of the study is 979, however, the sample size (those working within Katsina metropolis) was 120 and therefore total enumeration was used as sampling technic considering the number, in essence the sample was 120 graduates.

Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and the researchers personally distributed same with the help of research assistants. The questionnaire was validated to ensure face and content validity by experts in the field, statisticians and language experts. The reliability index obtained using the Guttman Split-half method alpha was 0.882 which was good enough to ensure reliable usage. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and statistical package for social sciences (SPPS) version 26 where tables and frequency, mean and percentages were used. the null hypotheses were

tested using PPMC and the text of significance was 0.05 (P=0.05)

4. Findings

This section presents the empirical data collected on the graduates concerned in this study. The data presented in this section was drawn from questionnaire administered on the graduates of the study. The study findings are presented under section 4.1 to 4.6 Below

4.1 Response rate

A total of 120 questionnaires were administered in the selected organization where Library and Information Science Graduates of Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, were employed or are engaged between 2010 and 2019. The response rates to the copies administered in each of the organizations are provided in Table 2. The table shows the Number of questionnaires administered, the number successfully filled and returned and the percentage of the returned questionnaire from each of the categories of the organizations. Though a total of 120 questionnaires were administered which representing the total population aimed at in the study, only 98 representing 81.7 of the total administered questionnaires were returned and used for the study. The percentage rates of the returned questionnaires for each of the categories of the organizations are presented in Table 2.

The dominant qualification of the graduates was MLS or MIS. Respondents with this level of qualification accounted for 57.14% of the total. Those with BLIS were 41.83% while those with Doctorate degree (Ph.D.) were 1.02% of the total graduates. By these qualifications, they would be expected to be conversant with the subject of this investigation and therefore provide the required information with minimum constraints.

4.2. Skills acquired by the UMYU LIS graduates

The acquired skills during training could sometimes be the requisite fundamental determinant of labour sales or demand in the job market. Table 4 below showed the skills acquired by the graduates during training in the university. Decision on each of the items and aggregate mean score for the table is based on the midpoint average of 3.0 on the five-point scale. Opinion on the graduates in the table revealed that Time manage was low on the scale among skills acquired by the graduates during their training in the university. Most responses consisting of 44.9% and 12.2% for very low and low) were of the view that the graduates' acquisition of Time management during training was not adequate. Only 32.7% of the responses said it was on the average. The mean score of 2.12 with a standard deviation of 1.178 showed that most responses did not agree that the graduates had adequate Time management skill during their training as undergraduates in the university.

4.3 Assessment of UMYU LIS Graduates Demanded by Organizations in the Job Market

The opinions of the responses on demand of UMYU LIS graduates in the job market are rated in Table 5. The rating was based on five-point scale (see Appendix A). Decision on each item is based on the midpoint average (3.0).

The aggregate mean score of 2.63 for the table revealed that the demand for the graduates in the job market was not very high. In Table 5, Their demand was scored average in ICTs firms, non-governmental organizations along with Library and Information Centres. These were the only areas where the skills of the graduates were up to average level demand in the job market. The mean scores for these areas of demand were relatively higher than the benchmark (3.0). In other areas of demand like in Banking institutions, Telecommunication Firms, Printing and Publishing firms, Academic Institutions, Hospitals, Foreign missions, Private firms, Public Enterprises and Industrial Establishments their demand was relatively

low as indicated with corresponding mean scores in Table 5. From the aggregate mean score of 2.63. It could be concluded that the demand for the graduate in the job market was low.

4.4 Organization where UMYU LIS Graduates are Employed

Table 6 showed opinions of responses on organization employing UMYU LIS graduates. The opinions were assessed on a five-point scale with means and standard deviations. Decision is based on a benchmark of 3.0.

The mean scores in Table 6 clearly indicated that non-governmental organizations (3.24), Library and Information Centres (3.04), Printing and Publishing firms (3.58) along with Industrial establishments (3.23) were the major organizations employing the graduates. In the table and Figure 9, these two organizations were the only place where the responses rating was above the 3.0 benchmark. Others like ICT firms (2.35), Banking institutions (2.40), Telecommunication Firms (2.26), Academic Institutions (2.00), Hospitals (2.36), Foreign missions (2.56), Private firms (2.53) and Public Enterprises (2.55). The aggregate mean score for the table was 2.60 with a standard deviation of 0.620. These are clear indication that the demand for the graduates in the job market was relatively low.

4.5 Challenges Faced by UMYU LIS Graduates in the Job Market

Table 7 showed the rated challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market. The ratings were accompanied with the corresponding mean scores and standard deviations. Decision on the items is based on a benchmark of 3.0.

There are numerous challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market as shown in Table 7. Among the most outstanding challenges were Poor thinking and problem-solving skills. This challenge

was rated by 41.8% and 22.4% of the responses that strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the constraint as a major factor affecting the graduates in the job market. Only 31.6% and 2.0% of the responses disagreed and strongly disagreed with the suggestion as a major challenge to the graduates in the job market.

The mean score of 3.70 showed that most responses were of the opinion that it was a major challenge. Next was poor teamwork skills for which 31.6% and 37.8% of the responses strongly agreed and agreed respectively was militating against them in the job market. Only 28.6% and 1.0% of the responses disagreed and strongly disagreed with the opinion. The mean score of 3.20 was higher than the benchmark (3.0). Another challenge according to the responses was that the LIS Curricula not properly implemented to suit the current job market. The mean score for that opinion was 3.09. Others were knowledge of written office communication with a mean score of 3.11.

Poor professional or specialized skills (3.03), Poor interpersonal skills (3.03). Some other listed challenges listed in the table and Figure 10 did not receive adequate ratings from the responses which implied that most of them did not consider them as major challenges facing UMYU LIS graduates in the job market. These included Weak presentation skills (2.14), Not Proficient with English language (2.31), Lack of online searching skills/ICT skills (2.03), Poor job interviewing skills (2.09), Procrastination and difficulty deciding on a desired workplace (2.42), Poor Information management Skills (2.14), How to Plan for further education (2.20) and Lack of job information (2.37). As shown in the table the mean scores were all lower than the benchmark which implied that responses did not consider them as major challenges to UMYU LIS graduates in the job market. The aggregate mean score of 2.65 for the table indicated that responses did not in their overall

assessment see major challenge to UMYU LIS graduates in the job market.

4.6 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis i: There is no significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' skills and their demand in the job market.

This hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the two variables. The result of the test is summarized in Table 8.

The result in Table 8 revealed that acquired skills of the graduates is significantly correlated with demand of their labour in the job market. The observed correlation coefficient (r-calc.) was 0.492 at 96 df. The observed significant level for the test was 0.000 (P < 0.05). These observations provide enough evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' skills and their demand in the job market is therefore rejected. The finding revealed that skills acquired by the graduate could be a major factor of demand for their labour in the job market.

Hypothesis ii: There is no significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' acquired skills and the challenges they face in the job market.

This hypothesis was tested with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine the relationship between graduates' acquired skills and challenges they face in the job market. The result of the test is summarized in Table 9.

The result in the table revealed that graduates' acquired skills during undergraduate training in the university was significantly correlated with the challenges they face in the job market. This is indicated with an observed correlation coefficient of 0.360 obtained at 96 df. The observed significant level for the test was 0.000 (P < 0.05). By these observations the null hypothesis that there is no

significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' acquired skills and the challenges they face in the job market is therefore rejected. The indications here are that acquisition of some skills could help reducing some of the challenges faced by the graduates in the job markets.

5. Summary, conclusion and recommendations

In response to the first objective the demand for UMYU LIS graduates was generally low. The second objective sought to identify sectors employing UMYU LIS graduates and these were Industrial establishments, non-governmental organizations, Library and Information Centres and Printing and Publishing firms. In realizing the sixth objective, among the challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market as found by the study were thinking and problem-solving skills and teamwork.

The first null hypothesis revealed that there was significant relationship established between UMYU LIS graduates' skills and their demand in the job market.

While the second null hypothesis found that there was significant relationship between skills acquisition and the challenges faced by UMYU LIS graduates in the job market.

In conclusion, the study found that demand for the graduates was below average in the job market. Demand for the graduates revolved round mainly ICTs firms, non-governmental organizations along with Library and Information Centers.

Other organizations like in Banking institutions, Telecommunication Firms, Printing and Publishing firms, Academic Institutions, Hospitals, Foreign missions, Private firms, public enterprises and Industrial establishments did not rate the demand for the graduate to an average level in the job market. The finding here is in line with Salubi (2017) who itemized some skills and abilities employers of LIS

graduates require to include computer and information technological skills for using Internet and computer communication networks among others. The finding is in line with Yadav and Bankar, (2016) who opined that LIS graduates are not only expected to have core information processing skills but also be able to implement ICT knowledge efficiently and effectively.

This study found that responses from organizations employing the graduates were generally of the view that those of UMYU LIS were generally better than their counterparts from other disciplines in respect to performance in teaching and communication. It was found out that responses' charts did not agree that the UMYU graduates' performing in other areas could be said to be adequate. Those included ICT handling, internet searching, working under pressure, team work, innovation, interpersonal relations, punctuality and timeliness, research, Perform better than others under less supervision among others.

The study found that the graduates faced some major challenges in the job market. Foremost was poor thinking and problem-solving skills and poor teamwork. There was the inadequacy of skills-oriented courses in LIS Curricula to suit demand in contemporary job market. Other challenges rated by the respondents were found to be below average. These were knowledge of written office communication, Poor professional or specialized skills, Poor interpersonal skills, Weak presentation skills, Not Proficient with English language, Lack of online searching/ICT skills and difficulty deciding on a desired workplace among others. This finding contradicted the report of Tadasad, (2015) who stated that departments of LIS have brought about several changes in LIS curricular, methods of instruction, use of ICT in teaching, learning, etc to equip students with relevant skills and competencies for competitive advantage in the job market.

This study found significant relationship between UMYU LIS graduates' acquired skills and their performance in their respective jobs. A linear relationship was found between the two variables which implied that better acquisition of skills by the graduates could lead to higher performances in their respective jobs.

In line with the summary and conclusion the study recommends among others that:

1. There is need for UMYU LIS curriculum review to reflect contemporary issues in relation to job market competitiveness
2. The student industrial training done by LIS students should be extended to more establishment other than information centres to give the graduates more experience in other organizations.
3. More skills related courses need to be introduced to better equipping graduates of the department to be able to compete effectively with their counterparts in the job market.

Table 1: Population of UMYU LIS graduates 2008/2009 to 2019/2020 sessions

S/N	Year of Graduation	Population
1	2008/2009	7
2	20009/2010	32
3	2010/2011	43
4	2011/2012	51
5	2012/2013	63
6	2013/2014	87
7	2014/2015	119
8	2015/2016	159
9	2016/2017	133
10	2017/2018	97
11	2018/2019	93
12	2019/2020	95
13	**Total**	**979**

Source: LIS Department, UMYU

References

Alera, D. P. (2017). Tracer Study of the MPSPC Masters in Business Administration (MBA) Graduates from 2003-2014. Retrieved from: http://www.mpspc.edu.ph/index.php/15-abstracts/162-tracer-study-of-the-mpspc-masters-in-business-administration-mba-graduates-from-2003-2014 Accessed on April 25, 2020.

Bailey, K.D. (1987). Methods of Social Research. Third Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Balingbing, A. (2014). Tracer Study of BS in Information Technology (BSIT) Graduates of Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, Nabua, Camarines Sur from 2004 to 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/APJMR-2014-2-098.pdf Accessed on April 25, 2020.

Burnett, P. (2013). Challenges and Problems of Library and Information Science Education in Selected African Countries. Paper Presented at IFLA WLIC Singapore, 2013. Available: http://library.ifla.org/175/1/199-burnett-en.pdf Accessed on August 4, 2020.

Haider, S. Z. (2008). Challenges in Higher Education: Special Reference to Pakistan and South Asian Developing Countries. Nonpartisan Education Review, Essays, 4 (2) 1-12.

Ocholla, D.N. (2001) Curriculum Response to a Changing National and International Information Environment: Theoretical and Methodological Paradigms on Review and Revision. Education for Information, 19 (2) 143-168

Ojedokun, A. A. and Moahi, K. H. (2005). The Emerging Market for Information Professionals in Botswana, and the Skills Requirements. Education for Information, 23:129–139.

Salubi, O. G. (2017). Library and Information Science Education and Training Curriculum at Institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria: A Content Analysis. Journal of Social Science, 51(1-3) 79-86

Shongwe, M. and Ocholla, D. (2011). A Tracer Study of LIS Graduates at the University of Zululand, 2000–2009. Mousaion, 29 (2) 227—245.

Tadasad, P. G. (2014). Employability of Library and Information Professionals: Issues for Post-graduate Departments of Library and Information Science. Journal of Indian Library Association 51(4). 30-39

Teowkul, K., Seributra, N. J., Sangkaworn, Denvilai, S., C., Jivasantikarn, C., and Mujtaba, B. (2008). Motivational Factors of Graduate Students Pursuing Master and Doctoral Degrees in Business. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hcbe_facpres/279 Accessed on April 10, 2020.

Top Universities (2013). The Benefits of a Graduate Degree. Retrived from the World Wide Web: https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/benefits-graduate-degree Accessed on May 25, 2020.

Zainab, A.N., Edzan, N.N. and Rahman, S.S.A. (2004). Tracing Graduates to Ascertain Curriculum Relevance. Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science, 9 (1) 27-37.