Library and Information Science as a Choice Career in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This paper sought to examine factors which affect the choice of Library and Information Science as a career in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The population consists of 105 respondents from the Department of Library and Information Science from 2007/08 to 2010/2011sessions. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages. The result of the study revealed that a good number of the respondents chose library and information science as their course of study due to their inability to secure admission into preferred courses like law and medicine. The result also showed that majority of the respondents was not aware of library and information science as a course in their primary and secondary schools. Hence, the researchers recommended among others, that there is need for constant creation of awareness about Library and Information Science as a career right from the primary and secondary school levels.
Keywords: Library, Information Science, Students

1. Introduction

An important factor in the development of any profession is the system of educating its entrants or initiates into the field. Personnel, especially professionals are the foundations for effective and efficient library and information services as it is also with other professions. Library activities or operations are becoming more sophisticated and complex due to rapid technological development and information explosion. The society has become largely dependent on information as their existence hinged on the availability, unhindered accessibility and intelligent use of information. To effectively and constantly provide for these needs, trained personnel with vision, technical expertise and managerial ability are required, such calibre as could manage, disseminate and interpret information with accompanying technologies. All these have necessitated the re-appraisal of library education and training with the aim of attaining the required capacity.

The future of the library and information science profession is at a cross road because of the growing anxiety arising from a situation where many students opting for library and information science as a course of study does so only after failing to secure admission into other choice courses. This could result to the production of uncommitted professionals who would populate the workforce in the near future. It is in the light of this that Burke and Peter (1992) opined that students come to the course without knowing what the profession involves.

Many Nigerian youths go into unsuitable careers because of ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers or due to the prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counselling (Salami, 1991). Consequently, many youths are most unsuitable for their careers as they usually find themselves in jobs where they could not satisfy their value needs. When this occurs, they constitute nuisance to themselves and the profession, unable to contribute meaningfully to the society.

Librarianship is a profession that is dedicated to serving the general public, providing timely and accurate information, thus contributing to the development of the society. However, it hardly shares the glamour and respect of some other professions like law, medicine and engineering. Igbnoba (2004) rightly observed that people, particularly students do not like to pursue a career in librarianship. They do not realize that librarians are heroes behind the successful stories of students, researchers and professionals

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that only a few under-graduates usually apply to study Library and Information Science as first choice course. Many who are eventually admitted into library schools enroll because they were unable to secure admission in other preferred departments. This development tends to turn library schools in Nigeria into dumping grounds for candidates who could not be admitted to study their preferred courses. The present situation seems to portend danger for the future of the library and information science profession in Nigeria hence the need to ascertain from the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University why they chose library science as

their course of study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine factors which affect the career choice of Library and Information Science by students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Specifically the study sought to ascertain:

1. The students' first choice course
2. The reasons for choosing Library and Information Science.
3. When the students became aware of the course.
4. The sources of information used in choosing library and information science as a course.

Research Question:

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the first choice courses of the students?
2. What are the reasons for the choice of Library and Information Science?
3. When did the students become aware of the course?
4. What are the available sources of information used in choosing library and information science as a course?

Literature

Observation has shown that prospective undergraduates in library schools in Nigeria would have preferred other courses of study to Library and Information Science. It seems that many fresh students in library schools offered to study the course only after they have been rejected by the departments of first choice owing to low scores obtained at the University Joint Admission Matriculation Examination. Probably, they have tried in vain to secure admission into other courses and opted to study Library and Information Science as a last resort. This observation was supported by Agumanu (1989) who surveyed the second, third and fourth year students at the Imo State University Library School with a view to identifying factors which influence their choice of the course, and found out that it was not a typical first choice of these students as 80% respondents had the initial choice of law.

Also, many Nigerian youths are faced with the problems of deciding which career to choose at 1st degree. Geshinde (1986) cited by Adeyemo (2003) opined that there is a danger inherent in making wrong career choices; including adverse effect on health, difficulty in making friends and finding colleagues and lack of job security. Supporting this opinion, Issa and Nwalo (2008) stated that wrong choice of career can lead to frustration and low productivity.

Many factors affect the career choice of adolescents. Ferry (2006) highlighted the factors that determine adolescent occupational choice to include life content, personal attitude and educational attainment. However, Bello (1996) mentioned three factors which spur one into librarianship. He stated that:

i. the choice of librarianship is externally influenced directly or indirectly by one or more of the following: parents, friends, mass media, employer and counseling;

ii. the choice of librarianship as a career is professionally influenced by factors such as: stability, secure future, social status, prestige of the profession, satisfactory earnings and acquisition of knowledge;

iii. the choice of librarianship is influenced by self-expressed values such as: the use of one's special ability, aptitude, creativity and the opportunity to work with people. Similarly, Issa and Nwalo (2008) noted that one external factor which helps to determine the choice of librarianship as a career is the influence of individuals. These individuals may be librarians, parents, friends or teachers.

Some of writers have carried out research to ascertain reasons for choice of Library and Information Science as a career. For instance, Bello (1996) carried out a survey of MLS students both at Ibadan and Zaria Library schools, focusing on the 1987 – 91 sets, with an enrolment capacity of 115 students from both library schools. The study discovered that the age bracket of the students fall within 26 – 30 years old. Some of them already have previous work experiences, majority of who have first degree in Arts, Education and Social Sciences.

Also, the study by Akussah, Tackie and Tiamiya (1999) examined the entry-level perceptions and motivations of sub-degree diploma and postgraduate degree students, at the Department of Library and Archival Studies, University of Ghana. The result of the study showed that Archives Diploma students were more confident of their programmes, profession and career than their library science counterparts.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The entire population of 105 respondents was used. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data and the data collected were analyzed using simple percentages.

Result/Findings

Research Question 1:

What are the first choice courses of the students?

It can be seen in table I , that 10 respondents representing (9.5%) made Medicine their first choice

course; 15(14.3%) Accounting and 2 (1.9%) Engineering While none of the respondents made Pharmacy and Architecture their first course choice, 30(28.6%) respondents chose Law and 48(45.7%) respondent made Library and Information Science their first choice course. The result in the table below showed that there is a higher preference for courses other than Library and Information Science. While other choice courses recorded 57(54.3%), Library and Information Science had 48(45.7%) respondents which is below 50%.

Table 1 First Choice Course

S/N	Course	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Medicine	10	9.5%
2	Pharmacy	-	-
3	Accounting	15	14.3%
4	Engineering	2	1.9%
5	Architecture	-	-
6	Law	30	28.6%
7	Library and Information Science	48	45.7%
	Total	**105**	**100**

Research Question 2:

What are the reasons for the choice of Library and Information Science?

Result in Table 2 showed that none of the respondents made their choice on account of high social status and respect. This could be as a result of the low popularity of the course. A closer look at the table also reveals that 12 (11.4%) of the respondents chose the course because of prospect of well paid job, 41(39.0%), 17(16.2%) chose the course because of good working conditions, while 20(19.0%) did so for prospects of well secured jobs, 15(14.3%) of the respondent chose the career to gain library working experience.

Table 2 Reasons for choice of library and information science

S/N	Reasons for the choice	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	High social status and respect	-	-
2	Prospect of well paying job	12	11.4%
3	Bright future career prospects	41	39.0%
4	Good working conditions	17	16.2%
5	Prospects of well secured jobs	20	19.0%
6	Library working experience	15	14.3%
	Total	**105**	**100**

Research Question 3:

When did the students become aware of the course?

Table 3 Period of awareness of the course.

S/N	First awareness period	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Primary school	5	4.8%
2	Secondary school	15	14.3%
3	After secondary school	25	23.8%
4	Inability to secure admission to Preferred course	60	57.1%
	Total	**105**	**100**

Table 3 above showed that 5 (4.8%) respondents first became aware of the course while in primary schools; 15(14.3%) in secondary schools; 25(23.3%) respondents after secondary schools and 60(57.1%) came to know about the course only after failing to secure admission to their preferred course in the University. This last category accounts for more than 50% of the entire respondents.

Research Question 4:

What are the available sources of information used in choosing the course?

Table 4 Sources of information

S/N	Sources of information	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Secondary school guidance counselor	2	1.9%
2	Secondary school principal	-	-
3	Secondary school teacher	5	4.8%
4	Librarian	12	11.4%
5	Peers	22	20.9%
6	Radio, television and newspapers	9	8.6%
7	UME/JAMB Brochure	25	23.8%
8	Parents/Relations	30	28.6%
Total		**105**	**100**

Table 4 showed that 2(1.9%) respondents indicated that their source of information was secondary school guidance counselor, 5(4.8%) respondents said secondary school teachers and none opted for secondary school principal. Also, 12(11.4%) respondents said librarians, 22(20.9%) respondents peers, 9(8.6%) opted for radio, television and newspapers. However, 25(23.8%) respondents indicated UME/JAMB brochure and 30(28.6%) respondents said parents and relations were their sources of information about the course. The above statistics showed that UME/JAMB brochure, peers and parents and relations constituted the main sources of information.

Summary of Findings

The study revealed that:

i.   Although a good number of respondents made Library and Information Science their first choice course, it still remains unpopular because they were not aware of the course while in primary and secondary schools. Thus, ignorance about the course among post primary school leavers is a key factor responsible for its low preference.

ii.   Majority of the respondents who chose the course had good reasons for doing so. This includes bright future career and prospects of well paid job.

iii. Factors that affect the students' choice of librarianship such as inability to secure admission to preferred course, bright future career prospects, ignorance, parents and relations among others have been identified.

iv.   Available sources of information used by the respondents in choosing the course include parents and relations, peers and JAMB brochure.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite the fact that many of the respondents made Library and Information Science their first choice, Library and Information Science is still largely unpopular among prospective undergraduates in the society. This is so when compared to other high profile courses like Law and Medicine. However, the low popularity of the course among the youths is due to ignorance on the essence of the course, ignorance about the existence of librarianship among most post primary school leavers was a key factor affecting its low-level preference and popularity.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1.   Adequate and sustained publicity, especially among youths in the primary and post primary schools should be made by the Nigerian Library Association in order to increase awareness on the benefits of librarianship to the society and by that popularize the profession. This publicity has to be made in collaboration with government and other non government agencies to reach the grassroots especially primary and secondary schools. Guidance counselors in schools will have an important role to play here.

2.   Librarians both academics and practitioners should take up responsibilities in organizing and sponsoring mass media publicity programmes on the librarianship profession. Public awareness on librarianship is very important if the profession must attract some of the best brains.

3.   The career structure of librarians both in the public and private sector should be improved and enriched to attract new entrants into the profession.

4.   The Librarian Registration Council, the Nigerian Library Association and all stake holders in the education and practice of librarianship in Nigeria should review and regulate library education curriculum as well as the practice of librarianship in Nigeria.

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