

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR GRADUATES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Acquisition and utilisation of employability skills remains the sine qua non to creation of job, reduction of unemployment and employability of library and information science professionals in era of competition with other alternative information service providers. It is on this note that the paper explains the concept of employability, employability skills needed by graduate in library and information science, employment opportunities for library and information science professionals. Using a desk review method, this paper discussed the various factors that influence the acquisition employability skills by graduate of library and information science which include: lack of qualified staff, inadequate emphasis on employability skills in LIS Curriculum, Lack of leadership skills and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and Ignorance and lack of motivation on the part of the students to develop themselves. Some of the strategies to enhance the acquisition of employability skills for graduates of library and information science such as inclusion and implementation of well-developed curriculum with emphasis on employability skills, employment of qualified lecturers with sound pedagogy and provision of enabling environment for teaching and learning of library and information science in accredited institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: Employability, Employability Skills, Graduates, Library and information Science

Introduction

Labour market or workplace is dynamic and exposed to intense competition. Every organisation has targets to attain which are stated in their aims and objectives. The labour market is required to meet up with these objectives. Consequently, organizations do not just employ everybody who applied for the job. Pitan, (2016) defined employability as the ability of graduates to acquire and showcase or exhibit the knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes required to attain and sustain jobs in which they can be successful and fulfilled in life.

Employment and employability does not mean the same thing. According to Oliver (2015), to be employed means to be engaged in a job, while employability means the ability to possess the necessary or required qualities needed to get employment, not only that but to maintain and progress on the job. So for one to be employable you have to possess the necessary needed employability skills to grow on the job. There are certain qualities / attributes that the management of organisation looks out for in applicants. These serve as requirements for who should be employed or not. The management chooses the ones that have the likely desired employability skills and can perform or do well in the job.

The employability skills are those traits / qualities that put one employee above the other employee. They are the strengths and qualities that graduates of Library and Information Science and other employees are expected to have in order to be impactful in any organisation they find themselves. Employment skills are necessary to get one's foot in the door while employability skills help one to climb the ladder in one's chosen career. Employment skills include one's certificates and experiences. Employability skills are the in-demand skills that make you a successful candidate for employment when you are job hunting or seeking promotion. They are skills and traits that make someone desirable to an organization. These skills allow one to work well with others. Different scholars have said many things about employability skills with examples. Ediagbonya & Oyadongha, (2013) and Kalufy & Mwakajinga, (2016) defined employability skills as group of important skills needed to be transferred or acquired by graduates to enable them perform maximally, being productive, maintain and grow in their work place. These skills are soft skills; team working, problem solving, oral communication, and written communication, networking, and self-

management, tolerance to stress, time keeping/punctuality, and adaptability to working environment.

Employability Skills of Graduates

The technological changes and inflow of information demand that the current and future generation of librarians should be well trained to possess the needed knowledge, skills and positive attitude which are essential to cope with the demands of the modern world. Also, the increased rate of unemployment of graduate and the need to acquire employability skills by new university graduates have become a concern to university administrators, parents, employers, government, graduating students, and the society. The increased technological changes and competition have increased the need for the acquisition of employability skills for young graduate to fit into the ever-rising workforce capabilities. Peters (2022) said that there is urgent need for university's programmes to focus on inculcating employability skills to help in producing well-grounded graduates with the necessary capacity to face rapidly-evolving workforce. Employability is a set of all the personal attributes, skills and knowledge which makes an individual to function well in the labour market (Igwe, et al, 2020). The graduate employability skills refers to all the knowledge and skills which an undergraduate is expected to have acquired in the course of his study to help him survive and strive in any future career in a workplace. The fifteen top employability skills as reported in the job survey by World Economic Forum (2020: 35) include:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation ,
2. Active learning and learning strategies
3. Complex problem-solving,
4. Critical thinking and analysis,

5. Creativity, originality and initiative,
6. Leadership and social influence;
7. Technology use, monitoring and control,
8. Technology design and programming
9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility ,
10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation.
11. Emotional intelligence,
12. Troubleshooting and user experience,
13. Service orientation, Systems analysis
14. Evaluation;
15. Persuasion and negotiation.

Employability Skills Needed by Library and Information Science Graduates

Employable skills of a graduate in library and information science in the 21st century must fall in with the above fifteen top employability skills. Library and information science as a profession is saddled with the responsibility of producing graduates that will serve in various capacities for national development. Graduates of library & information science should be analytic, creative and innovative in designing and programming of new library services and market these services which will help in creating more job opportunities, attract fund and users to the library. Lack of employability skills among graduates is a contributing factor to high rate of unemployment ((Tran, 2010. Warraich & Ameen 2011). Also, Griffin and Annulis (2013) identified that the most employer of labour complain that new graduates lack creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making and self-learning skills. They only emerge from university with heads full of theories without the knowledge to apply them in real situations.

Consequently, those graduates should be well-equipped through professional, managerial and generic skills for responsibility that is ahead of them (Tondo and Lorfa 2019). They explained that the transformation brought by ICT in libraries has changed their role and services, and placed high demand on graduates of LIS to become gurus in hypertext, network and digital environment, the possession of skills and employability attributes will go a long way to determine the extent at which they will operate on the job. Employability skills according to Pradham (2015) are the ability of securing and retaining a well-paid job. The following employability skills are needed by LIS graduates; ICT skills, those skills according to Buarki, (2019) include; usage of office application (word, excel), using and managing library automated systems, acquisition, and catalogues, maintaining in-house database, designing and constructing web pages, database, online and internet searching to retrieve information. Kova'c and Keresztes (2022) recorded that soft skills, such as motivation, oral communication and presentation skills, interpersonal skills, flexibility, teamwork, stress resilience, problem solving, should be included in the employability skills for graduates. Graduates who are equipped with appropriate skills will increase job creation and productivity (Utkirov, 2023).

Moreover, Utkirov (2023) asserted that presentation skills, interview skills, IT skills, online searching skills, were the necessary skills that will help graduates to secure and sustain good jobs in an information age. Babalola and Abifarin, (2013) on the skills required among library and information science profession made the following submission; LIS graduates should be proficient in computer applications and technology management. In other words they should be computer literate, to function optimally in an online environment. This will help them to be firm in multiple works they perform and to answer questions presented by patrons. They

should be able to communicate to library users, co-workers, be creative to generate new ideas, openness to innovation and employer, to answer reference question which can be achieved through acquisition of business management skills and marketing/interpersonal skills. Above all they emphasised on the ability to speak, manage the audience and time management must be cherished since time wasted will not be recovered. In another investigative study by Koloba (2017) using four countries namely Malaysia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong expressed that employers of labour stressed that graduates should view communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills as the most important employability skills.

Furthermore, Kenchakkanavar, (2014) categorized those employability competencies into two: personal and professional/technical competencies. Under personal competencies LIS professionals should develop corporate mindset, communicate well, and possess logical and analytical skills, presentation skills, ability to negotiate well and human resource management. Professional/technical competencies include computer and internet literacy, networking inclined, information search and retrieval skills and operational knowledge of equipment and tools in use. Kumar, (2010) maintained that LIS professionals should be competent in both oral and electronic communication among users, colleagues and supervisors, uplift the integrity of their service to parent institution, possess adequate interpersonal and networking skills, and ability to manipulate library automation software found in the libraries. Also, Deng, et. al. (2012) stated that what it take LIS graduates just to get the job will include; communication, technical proficiencies and problem solving aptitude, they should be able to use information technology adequately. They should possess

soft skills, which include communication and organizational skills. Managerial skills to enable them succeed in a growing economy.

Employment opportunities for library and information science professionals

Several employment opportunities abound for graduates of LIS. Zippia,(2022) acknowledged that graduates of library and information science have opportunities to be employed, as such many graduates in US opt to work in the educational sector rather than in any other industry. Librarians have huge responsibilities on their shoulders and the number of library science careers continues to change and grow. The workforce offers opportunities for librarians to use their library science knowledge in various capacities. With the emergence of technologies, the work is much easier and it has opened up a wider range of new career paths that can be embraced. According to Bouchrika, (2023) graduates of library and information science can pursue a career or be employed in the following areas namely;

Teaching assistants: the graduates of LIS can work as teaching assistants; helping lecturers to plan a library science course, monitoring attendance and performance, and conduct their lessons and help solve individual students learning difficulties.

Library technicians: As library technicians the graduates take care of the day-to-day administrative duties in the library. They maintain and organize the physical and digital spaces of the library, manage information resources, assist patrons in accessing the library resources and services

Information officers: the graduates will saddled with the responsibility of collating data relevant for their organizations, editing of documents and design systems to make the information easily accessible to the relevant authorities.

Digital Archivists: As digital archivists they will collect, store, and preserve historical documents for present and future by desired users. They will provide access points to these materials through creation of metadata descriptions of the documents based on the law and regulation guiding electronic documentation for easy accessibility of these files.

Electronic Resources Librarians: Employed as electronic resources librarians they will help in improving the organizational access to digital materials, which include e-journals, e-books and databases etc. Their duties are to conduct training on application of ICTs in libraries and information centres. They select and acquire electronic resources through subscriptions, partner with vendors regarding license agreements, and disseminate relevant information to users.

Editors: Graduates of LIS can work as Editors. Their responsibilities are to evaluate and edit manuscripts and get them ready for publication. That is checking and correcting grammatical, stylistic, and factual errors.

Research analysts: They saddled with the responsibility of data collection and analysis for research purposes. They are employed as experts to use different research methodologies to collect data, analysis and write data-driven result reports that are presented to executives for strategic planning and decision making.

Indexer and abstractors: They review documents and help make information searches easier for patrons.

Instructional Coordinators: As Instructional coordinators the graduate librarians help in curriculum design and implementation, conduct training, improve teaching methods; organise, evaluate and recommend educational materials in the learning institutions.

Government records analysts: Their duties are to train administrative personnel, monitor state and local government records kept in the offices, offer assistance to state and local government in the implementation of laws and regulations related to records management.

Postsecondary Teachers in Library Science: They are employed to design course guides, collate materials for class use, facilitate class discussions, develop assessment tests and dedicate time for students counselling. In United States of America there are 5,000 postsecondary teachers in library science as at 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021),

Information architects: Their duties are to improve on the searching capabilities of the websites by organising the information on the websites for easy accessibility by users. This is done through the use of web-based platform and programming languages

Similarly, Babalola, & Abifarin, (2013) highlighted some of the employment opportunities for library and information science graduates to include publishing, development of computer software for libraries and information centres, production and sale of library equipment, abstracting and indexing services, information brokerage and consultancy services, vendor business, computer maintenance; owners and operators of business centres and cyber café businesses, establish private owned libraries and information centres for the public and bibliographic compilation and record management.

Challenges Associated with Acquisition of Employability Skills in Library and Information Science Profession

Lack of ICT facilities and ICT skills: Lack of seasoned professional and researchers that are technological skillful, insufficient training and motivation, inadequate finance is a major barrier, ICT resource and facilities which involve; provision of computer software and hardware, network connectivity, well – equipped laboratories are in shortfall in most of the schools. There should be collaboration, partnership between developed and poor countries, as no nation can operate in isolation. LIS professionals are challenged with a lot of bottlenecks in a bid to acquire the needed skills. Those problems according to Pradhan (2015) include; internal promotion policy, proxy librarians are made as librarian, lack of ICT skills, unavailability of lecturers that are proficient in ICT, lack of fund is a big challenge, lack of functional workshop/laboratories.

Some state and private institutions offering LIS are not accredited: Olubiyo, (2022) carried a research on library and information science LIS education in the 21st century. The findings of the study revealed the following challenges; accreditation issues, some state and private institutions offering LIS are not accredited, this pose a big challenge to skill acquisition. Head of library schools issue, some librarians lack the necessary teaching experience to handle students. Changing nature of LIS; the LIS School should constantly review and update their curriculum to furnish those graduates with the required skills and attributes to enable them thrive in information age.

Lack of qualified staff: Staffing situation, lack of qualified staff, created chance for employment of part-time lecturers. Shortage of facilities; facilities like buildings, lecture theatre, staff offices are not adequately provided. Low level of skills, inadequate facilities coupled with poor computer laboratories amounted to low level ICT and skills/practices.

These have made the library school to share the available offices with other departments. Anindo, (2016) recorded the following challenges; qualification of teachers affect acquisition of employable skills by students. Inadequate provision of training equipment, institutions do not have modern equipment, for teaching and inadequate teaching staff has led the institutions into hiring of part- time lecturers. The study recommended that teachers should employ practically- oriented teaching like field trips, project work, and simulation and worked-based teaching to impact those skills.

Inadequate emphasises on employability skills in LIS Curriculum: Warraich and Ameen (2011) noted that technological skills, communication skills, analytical ability and decision making skills promote employability of graduate librarians. They stressed that the challenges lie on the efficient implementation and transfer of those skills to the students. Library and information science curriculum for undergraduates should be designed to reflect employability skills which a librarian should possess to be to be employable, create job and to remedy the graduate incompetence experienced by the employers. Also, there should be qualified personnel to implement this design curriculum content to ensure students are adequately prepared to face the challenges they will meet in the wide variety of jobs. The implementation approach should also include; imparting on these graduates employability skills beyond skills needed for securing or searching for a job but should include having skillsets, individual techniques and other attributes for succeeding in a job (Mansour and Dean 2016).

Lack of self – belief/self- confidence: Some of the LIS graduates lacked self- belief and self-esteem about their discipline.

Lack of internship and other practical experience: Some LIS graduates lacked practical experience about what they learnt during their course of study in the university. Their quest for money can prevent from gaining the necessary when they eventually engaged in the training.

Poor enabling environment: This include, ill- equipped libraries, hostels, laboratories, classrooms, lecture-rooms, offices for staff were in short falls.

Lack of collaboration between universities and government: This can hinder graduate from possessing the needed employability skills. Also lack of partnership between underdeveloped and poor countries, as they cannot operate in isolation Buarki (2019).

Lack of leadership skills and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills: Also, in another study on employability skills possessed by Malaysia graduates identified that these graduates do not possess personal organisation and time management skills while leadership skills and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills had the lowest mean score in this digital age (M Mohamed Noor, 2013).

Ignorance and lack of motivation on the part of the students to develop themselves: In a similar study carried out by Igwe et al (2020) on “What factors determine the development of employability skills in Nigerian higher education?” identified that many of the students are not aware of the importance of employability skills and are not motivated in acquiring them. Also, inadequate orientation on what the degree programmes can offer and the career prospects and importance was not attached to learning such skills even from their primary and secondary education, emphasis was not laid on learning-by-doing. Many of the students enter universities just to graduate and get certificate without knowing what they want. Hence

there is urgent need for counseling on career choice and the employability skills needed for any profession. According to Kinash (2015) most of these undergraduate realised the need for employability services and development of these skills too late

Strategies for Enhancing the Employability Skills of Library and Information Science Graduates

Adequate ICT facilities and ICT skills: Ma'dan et.al (2020) identified the following strategies for improving the employability skills of Malaysian public universities; improve the skills and capabilities of lecturers at the university, effective teaching techniques such as outcome – based learning, student centered learning, providing training to lecturers and staff.

Institutions offering LIS should be accredited: Accreditation should be constantly observed to maintain standard, in all the institutions offering LIS.

Employing qualified staff: Teaching staff that are ICT inclined should be employed and library schools should ensure constant training for them.

Adequate emphasis on employability skills in LIS curriculum: Pradhan, (2015) Studied the employability and needed skills for LIS graduates of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and found out that hundred percent of these graduates from the university get employed immediately after graduation. The secret of success story is that LIS curriculum is revised regularly to include any latest development in the field of librarianship to reflect the competency and skills needed in the labour market. Also, all these skills are imparted to these students through seminar presentation, practical working in a real library (library attachment), extensive training on database management and creation of digital libraries using propriety and open sources library software, group discussion, team work oriented project, Buarki,

(2019) advocates for LIS curricula improvement, the curriculum should be reorganized to capture new courses.

Self-Belief: Pitan (2016) stressed that there are three popular constructs of self-belief that can enhance employability skills of graduate which are self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. So graduates of LIS should always believe in their capabilities to perform a task or achieve goals in librarianship. The graduates should have self-confidence, trust and self-esteem in the library profession.

Provision of Enabling Environment: There should be provision of enabling environment to promote the inculcation and mastering of the employability skills for graduates of Library and Information science in their institutions of higher learning. The responsibility should be placed on the government, parents and authorities in the learning institutions. According to Sumanasiri et. al. (2015), the joint responsibility is because acquisition of employability skills involves experience, subject knowledge, well developed curriculum, faculty and pedagogy (method of impacting knowledge) in the institutions and personality traits of the students. In support of enabling environment for the acquisition of employability skills for graduate Pitan (2016) encouraged that there should be well equipped and modern libraries, lecture rooms, faculty offices, hostels , laboratories and other basic infrastructures for teaching and learning.

Internships and other work experience: Many students do not attend industry experience (attachment) during the cause of their studies to gain necessary practical experience needed in their field of study in Nigeria. Some students search for organisations which are related to their course of study just to earn some money instead of going to serve where they will gain practical experiences and practice the employability skills they learnt in schools. Bartett (2022) advised that the placement of these students should be done by their lecturers,

university's careers and employability team to provide placement that can inculcate excellent opportunities for the development of skills, expansion of professional network, gain professional references or recommendations, which may lead to on-going employment. This will instill in the students motivation and feeling of excitement in their discipline area. Library and information undergraduates should be posted to work in the library and other information centres.

Collaboration of universities and government to enhance development of employability skills:

According to Tran, (2019) university authorities should endeavor to create awareness and help their students to acquire the basic knowledge and skills to enhance labour market condition and social capital. These developments will help students to be more flexible, increase in lifelong learning and adapt easily to local and international working environment.

Provision of adequate and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills:

Arputhamater and Lakshmi (2020) explored enhancing graduate students' employability and sustainability skills through value educational courses. Findings revealed that courses in leadership which include; goal setting, team motivation, conflict management, development of positive attitude and collaborative skills. Enabled them to confront challenges and make them to succeed in the workforce.

Awareness and motivation on students' to develop themselves:

Students' should be aware of the importance of employability skills and be motivated to acquire them. Proper orientation should be given right from primary and secondary schools on learning- by- doing, which will culminate into university.

Conclusion

The society and the parents expect these students that attend higher institutions of learning as people who will graduate to be employable and employed but their view is being dashed into the tin air because the world of work is changing rapidly. Also, some of the undergraduate curriculum are not designed to inculcate the necessary kind of employability and academic skills needed for professional and lifelong learning skills required for their graduates to be relevant and successful in their jobs in Nigeria. Employability of any graduate in any library job depends on the individual graduate ability to acquire knowledge, essential skills and necessary challenges and opportunities available in the labour market for present and future librarians.

In Nigeria the over dependence on paper certification for employment should be discouraged. Emphasis should be placed on graduates that stand out in the crowd with necessary employability skills and knowledge. Employers expecting to employ the graduates of LIS should be sincere in identifying the graduates that have the technical and content knowledge of librarianship with broader employability skills such as good communication skill, interpersonal skills, leadership, creativity, critical thinking, managerial abilities and team-working skill with experiences from internships and work-based learning.

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