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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills and Employment of Staff in Selected University Libraries in South-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

ICT has become a part and parcel of the 21st century librarianship, supporting efficient service delivery especially in university libraries. That Nigerian university libraries have embraced ICT is a fact that is supported by empirical evidences. However, the possession of the technological skills required for optimum performance in these libraries by their staff has been a source of concern to researchers. This study therefore investigated the influence of possession of ICT on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. The ex-post facto research design was adopted, while census sampling technique was employed. The population comprised all the 143 professional and paraprofessional librarians in the libraries under study. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed Mean and standard deviation. T-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study shows that although both the staff with ICT skills prior to employment and those without saw the need for ICT skills to be considered during recruitment, there is no significant influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in the libraries under study. Thus, library staff were not employed based on the ICT skills possessed at entry level. It was therefore recommended that, management of the university libraries should ensure that prospective employees possess the requisite ICT skills needed for optimal performance before their employment.

Keywords: *ICT Skills, Employment, University Libraries, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library*

1.1 Introduction

Information and Communication Technology is the application of computers and other electronic gadgets to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval, dissemination and preservation of information. The

emergence of ICTs has inspired stiff competitions in today's business environment. It has become an era of 'survival of the fittest'. No business enterprise whether profit or service-oriented like the library is immune to the sweeping effects of ICT. The application

of ICT in libraries has become an acceptable norm, being the most realistic way and means of providing timely, accurate and efficient information services (Abubakar 2011).

Possessing ICT skills in this context connotes the ability to manipulate the computer and the other related gadgets in order to perform library functions. According to Akande (2014), these skills include: word processing; desktop publishing; use of bibliographic software packages like spreadsheets, graphics, bulletin boards; familiarity with data and file manipulation; maintaining World Wide Web (www) files, familiarity with local automated system; IT troubleshooting; familiarity with different operational systems; electronic resources management skills; networking skills; internet browsing skills; information literacy skills; knowledge mapping skills etc. Given the technology-improved nature of Nigerian university libraries, possession of ICT skills could be a potent factor for consideration during recruitments. This is because modern library operations have become technology driven, requiring competence in ICT by potential employees to ensure operational efficiency in execution of library functions.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In the present era of technological developments, it has been observed that market demands for library professionals are changing in terms of qualification, experience, professional and technical skills. Several researchers have raised concerns on the technical competence of librarians in coping with multifaceted challenges of the introduction of ICT in libraries. According to Akhilesh & Prerana (2016), LIS graduates are not only expected to have core library skills but also the ability to implement ICT knowledge efficiently and effectively. Employment of staff in today's university libraries is a goal that is not only indispensable, but one that should be pursued

with principles subsumed in certain variables that point to the applicant's possession of requisite ICT competence and technicality. Review of literature indicates a paucity of empirical evidence on the subject of ICT skills and employment of staff in Nigerian university libraries. This study was carried out to fill this gap, by bringing to limelight the influence of possession of ICT skill on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan.

1.3 Objective of the study

The specific objective of this study is to determine the influence of possession of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan

1.4 Hypothesis

Ho¹: There is no significant influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in the libraries under study.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

ICT in libraries comprises all electronic infrastructure and facilities employed by libraries to improve and provide efficient services. Such facilities consist of hardware, software and communication links like the internet, intranet, computers, printers, scanners, intercoms, telephones, etc. between the service outlets of different libraries to facilitate the sharing of common resource; especially the library networks.

Developments in ICTs according to Abubakar(2011), have now offered libraries an exciting but challenging opportunities that require them to respond positively in all facets of their services and functions if they are to

remain relevant in the 21st century. The increase in information phenomenon has subsequently led to the proliferation of technologies designed for its gathering, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination. Since libraries are at the centre of information business, it will not remain unchanged when these technologies are changing. Hence, possession of ICT skills has become an important recruitment variable for libraries (Madu, Aboyade & Aboyade, 2016). The concept of ICT skills according to Nnadozie (2016) has two interpretations both of which are mutually-reinforcing, viz: 'understanding of the ICTs and dexterity in manipulation of ICTs'. This competency or skill should improve the quality of librarian's services as well as enhance the satisfaction derived by their patrons.

Lawal (2010) rightly observed that, the provision of library services through applications of ICTs is the current norm in librarianship the world over. However, the role of library as repository of knowledge and the librarian as intermediary seemed threatened as the implications of ICTs continue to surge. Akintunde (2006) has raised some observations about the technical competence of the 21st century librarians in the face of the changing trends. Much of the necessary ICT facilities and services are reported adequate during statutory verification and accreditation exercises conducted by the National University Commission (NUC) and other regulatory professional associations in the country. Consequently, librarians in these universities are expected to possess the requisite ICT skills (Nnadozie, 2016).

Above the mere adoption and application of ICT in libraries, Onwubiko (2006), believes that the peculiarities of ICT suggest to libraries and librarians that it can no longer be the era of meek and apologetic librarianship. Since the prototype of yesterday's librarians is today endangered

species; library and information professionals, in order to play new roles as specialists, interpreters, disseminators research investigators, cybrarians, trainers etc. need to be empowered with new knowledge and ICT skills. Hence Aboyade, Oyebanji and Amusan (2014), assert that the strategies for meeting the current challenges to providing library services begin with active acquisition of ICT skill by librarians. This assertion gives support to the claim by (Mishra 2009) that competence in computer utilization for the execution of library service is fast on the track of considerations during employment.

It is generally believed that ICT skills development provides a framework through which library employees acquire and maintain the competencies that are needed to achieve and maintain quality services and their own satisfaction with their work (Lawal, 2010). With the emergence of ICT, there is a shift from the traditional process of providing information to modern approaches to library and documentation services. The concepts of virtual libraries, digital libraries, paperless systems, electronic books, CD-ROMS and ICT suggest that employment in the modern day libraries are for those who possess the technical- knowhow and skills to manipulate the associated technologies for quality service delivery (Ifijeh, 2010).

In Ireland, there is a strong job market for professional and para-professional library staff. Cullen (2009) concluded that traditional library sector demands professional library qualification along with IT skills, communication and management skills. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of analysis of 301 advertisements/job notices for 323 positions in Ireland.

Similarly, the study by Ezema, Ugwuanyi and Ugwu (2014), to examine skills requirement of librarians for the emerging digital library in University of Nigeria, Nsukka shows that Information and

Communication Technology skills are required for both practicing and prospective librarians for the emerging digital library environment. The study further revealed that the most critical ICT skills needed by librarians are electronic resource management, and networking skills. This is not surprising because, the new era library relies heavily on electronic information resources which are propelled by ability to search the internet and other major data bases. Without these skills it would be difficult for librarians to cope in the emerging digital library environment.

Indeed, all core tasks of librarianship can be better performed with the use of ICT. For instance, the available resources is made accessible through ICT, hence the reference librarian can attend to the queries of numerous users through the electronic mails (Bappah, Binta and Mustapha, 2016). Hundreds of thousands of journals and e-books are available online through such data bases as EBSCO, JSTOR, AJOL, etc. thus helping acquisitions librarians to keep track of published materials. Also, through ICT, cataloguers can now make use of online catalogues of other libraries as well as online classification schemes (Ifijeh, 2010). More so, the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (2014) recommended that librarians and other professional staff should possess ICT competencies and literacy in order to meet the academic needs of their institutions and provide management support.

In the view of the foregoing, applicants and employees who seek opportunities and relevance in today's technology-driven university libraries must endeavour, as a matter of urgent priority, to acquire relevant ICT skills to enable them demonstrate the technical know-what, know-why, know-how and show-how. These required skills for optimal performance of modern librarians include: adept ICT skill; instructional skill; life-long learning/

continuing education skill; research skill; knowledge mapping skill; information literacy skill; word processing; desktop publishing; use of bibliographic software packages like spreadsheets, graphics, bulletin boards; familiarity with data and file manipulation; familiarity with local automated system; IT troubleshooting; familiarity with different operational systems; electronic resources management skills; networking skills; internet browsing skills etc. The need for this research arose because there is no known empirical evidence of the influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in federal university libraries, especially in South-west, Nigeria.

3.1 Research Methodology

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study. This design was chosen because the event that generated data for this study took place in the past prior to the conduct of the research. The population of the study consisted of 143 professional and paraprofessional librarians in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed using four-point rating scale responses of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by three validators and further subjected to a reliability test in which an internal consistent coefficient of 0.865 was obtained. Data generated for the study were analysed using Mean and standard deviation; while t-test, was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

4.1 Data Analysis and Result

Table 1: Summary of the Respondents' Mean Scores on Influence of possession of ICT skills on Employment of Staff in the Libraries Under study

ICT skills possession prior/ before employment	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference
Staff that possess ICT skills	87	3.24	.88	0.1
Staff without ICT skills	47	3.14	.91	
Grand Mean	134	3.20	.89	

Table 1 above shows the response of library staff that possessed ICT skills prior to employment. The result of analysis shows that the Mean response of staff with ICT skills is 3.24; this is higher than the Mean response of staff without ICT skills prior to employment (3.14). The result shows a mean difference of 0.1, however small, though not negligible, indicating that both employees with and without ICT skills see the need for the ICT skills to influence employment in libraries.

4.1 Testing the Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated to guide the study is tested at .05 level of significance. There is no significant influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in the libraries under study.

Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	T-cal	T-crit	Decision
possession ICT skills	134	3.20	.89	132	0.01	1.96	Accept H ₀
employment of staff	134	3.20	0.88				

Table 2 shows the summary of the t-test analysis for the significant test for influence of possession of ICT skills on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. The result shows that the grand Mean for possession of ICT skills is 3.20 while the Mean for Employment of staff is 3.20. The result shows a calculated t-value of 0.01. At

132 degree of freedom and .05 alpha level, the critical value is 1.96. Since the t-cal is less than the t-critical, the null hypothesis is accepted, thus, there is no significant influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in the libraries under study. Thus, library staff were not employed based on the ICT skills possessed at entry level.

5:1 Discussion of Findings

The result from the analysis reveals that there is no significant influence of possession of ICT skills on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. This implies that library staff were not employed based on the ICT skills they possessed or do not possess at entry level. The situation may be attributed to the fact that library schools in Nigeria have integrated the teaching of ICT skills in their curriculum. Hence, it is believed that graduates from library schools should ordinarily possess the requisite ICT skills. Again, given the fact that the libraries under study are among the first generation academic libraries in Nigeria, many of the staff might have been employed before the emergence of ICT skills as a recruitment variable in academic libraries. It may also be that the libraries have a very good in-house training mechanism and other staff development programmes that new employees are made to pass through before deployment, hence the de-emphasis of ICT skills during recruitment processes.

Moreover, Ifidon and Ifidon (2008), have observed that the whole purpose of staff recruitment is defeated if recruitment is not complemented by staff development.

The finding of this study is in line with Bappah, Binta and Mustapha (2016), in their examination of ICT skills of academic librarians in Kano State, North-Western Nigeria in which they found that basic ICT skills were lacking among librarians in tertiary institutions in the state before their employment. The authors however noted that ICT skills acquisition is a prerequisite condition for someone to be able to function effectively in today's academic libraries. This observation equally correlates with the result of this study which shows a mean difference of 0.1, though small, but not negligible. It indicated that both employees with and

without ICT skills (prior to employment) see the need for the ICT skills to influence employment in university libraries. The finding of this study is equally in line with Akhilesh and Prerana (2016), whose investigation on employment opportunities in LIS field in India reveals that most of the LIS advertised positions do not mention that additional skills like good communication skills and knowledge of IT is required.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of possession of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills on employment of staff in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. The result shows that although both the staff with ICT skills prior to employment and those without saw the need for ICT skills to be considered during recruitment, there is no significant influence of possession ICT skills on employment of staff in the libraries under study. Thus, library staff were not employed based on the ICT skills possessed at entry level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Management of the university libraries should ensure that prospective employees possess the requisite ICT skills needed for optimal performance before their employment. Modern libraries are technology driven, therefore, employees should possess the technical competence to function effectively.
2. University library managers should institute continuous in-house training mechanism and other staff development programmes to retrain newly recruited staff before deployment.

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