

Chapter 12

An Assessment of the Perception of Library School Students towards Librarianship at the University of Ilorin: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

This is a pilot study, which investigated the perception of the University of Ilorin library school students towards librarianship. It was aimed at examining the characteristics of the students and how they got admitted into the Department. It adopted the survey research design where the entire 90 students (100 and 200 levels) constituted its population, while the 74 that were available during the data collection exercise represented the sample. Questionnaire and structured interview were employed for data collection. The results revealed that 75.7% in 100 and 24.3% of 200 levels came in through the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Examinations and direct admission/transfer, respectively. Their subject backgrounds include Arts (36.5%), Science (28.4%), and Commercial (23.0%); a majority had a SSSC (45.9%) result with the mean scores of 219 from JAMB and 59.69% from post-JAMB, respectively. The majority (87.8%) did not choose LIS originally, and 67.6% claimed to be initially uninterested, against the current positive perception (66.2%). Hypotheses tests showed no significant difference in subject background and current perception of students who chose and those who did not choose LIS as a first choice. It concluded that the peculiar situation under which many of the pioneering students came into the Department (i.e. transfer), was undesirable given the prevalent negative perception of librarianship. Appropriate recommendations were made.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-335-5.ch012

INTRODUCTION

The pattern of LIS education in any country is said to be shaped by a combination of circumstances, which according to Kargbo (1999), include “the nature of the country’s library service; the structure of tertiary education; the system of government; and the professional organizations which librarians themselves have formed” (pp. 97-103). Thus, a basic consideration for the development of any profession is the system of educating its initiates into the field. Personnel, especially professionals, are the foundations for effective and efficient library and information services similar to other professions. Planning for the future supply of this cadre of staff and adequate utilization of the present manpower often depend on a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of the existing professionals (Nzotta in Alemna, 1991). Hence, education for librarianship emanated out of a concern to develop an ideal profession to provide practitioners with appropriate working frameworks (Ibrahim, 1994).

Not only is librarianship a labour-intensive service profession, effective library services demand a much skilled and efficient staff. Thus, central to library development is personnel with modern librarianship demanding personnel with adequate education and training. However, unlike for other professions like Law, Medicine and Accountancy, librarianship has been a less popular calling especially among prospective undergraduates of Nigerian higher institutions such as the polytechnics and universities. This is due largely to the low-level awareness of what it is and what it entails, particularly at the primary and post-primary school levels where students normally begin to fiddle with different career ambitions. The situation has been that more of LIS undergraduates got into the department only when they have failed to secure their preferred courses of choice. This can only make for a crop of uninterested, uninspired and reluctant workforce of the future who could be lacking in required commitment and diligence on the field of

practice. This has been a source of great concern to many stakeholders in the LIS subsector, and thus attracting research attention.

The Emergence of Library School at the University of Ilorin

The University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, was one of the seven institutions of higher learning established by a decree of the Federal Military Government in August, 1975, aimed at providing more opportunities for Nigerians aspiring to acquire university education and to generate high level man-power, so vital for the then rapidly expanding economy. Academic activities commenced in October 1976 at the then University College with 200 foundation students and three faculties namely Arts, Science and Education. Today, seven additional faculties have since been added in the following order namely: Engineering & Technology (1978), Business & Social Sciences (1981), Agriculture (1982), Law (1993, after an initial start-up in 1983), Basic Medical Sciences (2004), Clinical Sciences (2004) and Communication and Information Sciences (2008).

The Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences (CIS) was formally established via the decision of the Senate at its 193rd (Special) meeting held on 20th June, 2008. Part of that Senate decision was the movement to CIS of the Department of Computer Science from the Faculty of Science; and same for the Department of Mass Communication from the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences. In addition to the decision to move these two Departments, was also the decision to formally commence activities in the departments of Information and Communication Science, Telecommunication Science, and Library and Information Science. This faculty is the University’s flagship faculty designed to take full advantage of multidisciplinary interactions of the science and technologies of computing, information and communication, with its undergraduate curriculum designed to reflect this.

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