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NATURE OF WORK AND LIBRARIANS' CHOICE OF LIBRARY PROFESSION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The study investigated the nature of work and Librarians' choice of library profession as a career in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria. It also investigated nature of work as it relates with librarians' choice of library profession as a career. The survey design was used for the study. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical technique and the relationship was established to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. The results of data analysis showed a moderately high positive correlation (0.52) between nature of work and librarians' choice of career. The study concluded that nature of work had a significant relationship with librarians' choice of library profession and is therefore considered a factor in Librarians' choice of career in tertiary institutions. The study recommended that librarians in tertiary institutions should administer various levels of tasks, services and privileges to faculty, students, alumni and the public. This will invariably serve as a source of inspiration that will attract people to choose the library profession as a career.

Key Words: Work, Librarian, Library, Profession, Career, Choice, Information, Science.

Introduction

A librarian is an information professional trained in library and information science, which is the organization and management of information services or materials for those with information needs. Typically, Librarians may be categorized as public, school, special, independent or academic librarians. Some librarians are independent entrepreneurs working as information specialists, cataloguers, indexers, publishers and other professional specialized capacities. The term "librarian" is used often and incorrectly to refer to anyone who works in a library.

Librarians as professionals also work in public, academic, special and school libraries, media centres, corporations and government agencies. They are key personnel wherever information materials are catalogued and stored; they also help make access to these reference materials possible. Thus, Librarianship is a profession that crosses the boundaries of time and space (Hopke, 2005).

Professional librarians in western nations like the United States, Canada, Australia, etc are professionals with a Master's degree in library and information science, capable of analyzing information,

information needs and of providing information services and materials to patrons in a variety of settings and with available and appropriate resources. Authors (Hernon ;1991, Lawal ,2002; Aguolu and Aguolu ,2002) have argued that "the respect and recognition accorded a profession by society are largely determined by the public understanding and acceptance of the importance of the profession in that society". This further shows that the status of the library profession is determined by the society's perception of the nature of librarians' duties and social responsibilities. Even though the society fails to realize these duties, librarians are often expected to take part in community affairs through community development projects like talk shows, cooperating in the preparation of exhibitions, present book reviews and explain library use to community organizations. As professionals, they are also expected to use their wealth of knowledge in developing the cultural taste of library patrons. This feature of a profession is therefore an index for its choice by librarians in tertiary institutions.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid changes in the economy of Nigeria have brought the importance of career choice into sharp focus. As the country's economy continues to expand following upsurge in technological advancements, the nature of many jobs changes and the techniques of its provision to individuals become important. This is to say that individuals have been motivated to enter into professions because of the job description of such careers. Therefore, most people have ultimately had an aversion for the library profession as they say it causes eye problems due to the constant eye strain. While some have also complained about having to pack books from one place to another or routinely shelving books, others have entered into the profession without knowing what the nature of library work entails and have had to opt out when it seemed the work description was too much for them to bear. Nature of work as it

influences career choices in the library profession should be viewed as dynamic and susceptible to changes as the economy alters. Therefore, a lack of the knowledge of the job description makes individuals incompetent participants in the field of librarianship and could also account for labour unrest, low productivity, unemployment and attendant labour problems.

Studies show that people's choice of library profession as a career seems to be an illusion from the outset. In Nigeria, there are hardly any studies on nature of work and librarians' choice of library profession. All previous studies (Lisack, 1975; Jacobwitz, 1983; Ezeala, 1993; Ubah, 1995; Abubakar, 2004; and Unagha, 2007) relate to the career choices of students but none of them investigated the career choice of librarians in tertiary institutions. There appears to be knowledge void in our understanding of how nature of work relates with librarians' choice of library profession in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria. This study is therefore being conducted to fill this void by determining the relationship between nature of work and librarians' choice of library profession as a career in tertiary institutions.

Objective of the Study

To ascertain the relationship between nature of work and librarians' choice of the library profession,

Research Question

What relationship exists between nature of work and librarians' choice of the library profession?

Hypothesis

Nature of work has no significant relationship with librarians' choice of the library profession.

Review of Related Literature

Nature of Work and Librarians' Choice of Library Profession

The library profession is a versatile and exciting career. It draws people from different subject specifications, fields and backgrounds. A choice of career in librarianship empowers an individual in the advancement and delivery of knowledge. Building a representative workforce that reflects everyone served by information is critical to making a library a welcoming and accessible space for all (Hayden, 2003).

Job description in the library is indeed a motivating factor for librarians' choice of the library profession as a career. Several studies carried out have indicated that most people chose the profession as a result of the nature of work librarians do. Some community college librarians as cited in Berry, (2007) attributed their choice of librarianship to the work environment i.e. the type of work librarians do and the library challenges, some however expressed their dislike for the library profession when they noted that they view reference and special library services as demanding and stressful especially when they have to deal with users who are working under deadline pressure. The authors also said that most respondents had similar views when they observed that librarians in the technical section of the library had a backlog of daily chores, as such, they suffered eye-strain and headaches from working long hours in front of a computer. This therefore made them skeptical about choosing a career in librarianship.

Kanle (2006) identified a major influence in his choice of library profession when he listed the job specification of librarians which attract people to the profession:

- (i) Enjoyment in helping and serving people.
- (ii) Interest in developing and providing services and resources that inform and entertain.
- (iii) Willingness to connect people who possess a variety of value and belief systems to materials that represent

multiple points of view. In a bid to help connect people with the information they require, the librarian has a number of tasks to carry out, some technical, others personal.

The job specifications of librarians are found to be relevant and influential on people's choice of librarianship as a career (Amusa, 1999). Chapman *et al.* (1999) found out that 48% of the respondents of GSLIS said that previous employment in a library had influenced their decision, whereas 30% did not have prior experience on the nature of work librarians do. The authors speculated that those who worked in a library and information centre prior to library school enjoyed the atmosphere and job specification found in the work place. Those who worked in library and had insight and hands on experience into the library work were able to decide what area they were likely going into when pursuing their professional careers in library and information science. On what led them to opt for library and information science, the respondents indicated job description or functions. Recommendation of a mentor, professor, co-worker or friend and prestige received the **least** responses.

The duties of professional librarians are mainly book selection and collection development, cataloguing and classification of library materials, reader education and instruction and liaison with academic staff (Ogundipe, 2005). Professional librarians in academic libraries serve a post-secondary institution. Thus many different types and sizes of collections are found in academic libraries, and some academic librarians are specialists in these collections and archives. Academic librarians administer various levels of tasks, services and privileges to faculty, students, alumni and the public. This forms the basis for people's choice of library profession as a career in tertiary institutions. Rothstein (1985) in a study reported that the nature of work librarians do, serves as

sources of inspiration that attract people in their preference for library and information science as a career.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The study covered tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State and Cross

River States. The population of the study comprised all the 86 professionally trained librarians in the 8 tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, chosen for the study. The tertiary institutions that formed the population of the study were eight in number as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Population as classified by tertiary institutions

| Tertiary institutions | Population of librarians | Sample of librarians | Percent (%) |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| University of Uyo, Uyo | 25 | 25 | 100 |
| College of Education, Afaha Nsit | 6 | 6 | 100 |
| College of Agriculture, Obio Akpa | 2 | 2 | 100 |
| Maritime Academy, Oron | 2 | 2 | 100 |
| Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua | 2 | 2 | 100 |
| University of Calabar, Calabar | 41 | 41 | 100 |
| Cross River State College of Technology | 7 | 7 | 100 |
| College of Education, Akamkpa | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| Total | 86 | 86 | 100 |

Source: Nominal Roll of each Institution

The total population of 86 librarians were also used as sample for the study because it was small and accessible. The distribution and sample of librarians in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states are presented in the table above. The instrument used for data collection for this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire.

To test the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire was given to 20 librarians randomly sampled outside the area of study. The responses were analysed using frequency count and the data obtained were used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient formula. The result showed that

the instrument had an overall reliability index of 0.85. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis Testing

Nature of work has no significant relationship with librarians' choice of library profession.

In this hypothesis, the independent variable is the nature of work, while librarians' choice of library profession is the dependent variable. The hypothesis was tested using the results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) summary of the analysis of scores on Nature of Work and librarians' choice of library profession (N = 86)

| Variables | $\sum X$ | $\sum X^2$ | $\sum XY$ | $r_{xy} (Cal)$ | Df | $r_{xy} (Crit)$ |
|--|----------|------------|-----------|----------------|----|-----------------|
| | $\sum Y$ | $\sum Y^2$ | | | | |
| Nature of work (X) | 767 | 6887 | 6820 | 0.52* | 84 | .20 |
| Librarians' choice of library profession (Y) | 762 | 6798 | | | | |

* Significant at $p < .05$ alpha

In Table 2, the calculated correlation coefficient for the relationship between nature of library work and Librarians' choice

of library profession, $r_{xy(Cal)}$, is 0.52 while its corresponding table value at df 84 and $p = .05$ alpha is 0.20. The $r_{xy(cal)}$ is positive and is

greater than its critical value. This indicates that, the relationship between nature of work and librarians' choice of the profession is positive and statistically significant. This means that librarians' choice of library profession is directly dependent on the nature of work involved in the profession. With this observation, the null hypothesis that nature of work has no significant relationship with librarians' choice of library profession was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

With respect to nature of work and choice of career in librarianship, the findings from the results in Table 2 showed that a significant positive relationship exist between the two variables. The magnitude correlation index of 0.52 indicates a moderate correlation between the variables. The observed positive correlation agrees with Chapman *et al.*'s (1999) study which found that previous employment in a library had influenced their decision, whereas 30% did not have prior experience on the nature of work librarians do but predictors of their choice was job descriptions and functions. Amusa (1999) observed that job specifications are relevant and influential determinants of peoples' choice of librarianship as a career. As observed by Rothstein (1985) the nature of work librarians do serves as sources of inspiration that attracts people in their preference for library and information science as a career. As noted earlier, the correlation is only moderate. This indicates that though many people go for librarianship because of its job descriptions, many look at librarians' work as demanding and stressful, especially when they have to do with users who are working under deadline pressure. This observation correlates Berry (2007) who attributed librarian's choice of career to the work environment i.e. the type of work librarians do and the library challenges.

The Major Finding

There is a moderately high positive correlation between nature of work and the librarians' choice of library profession in tertiary institutions (index = 0.52). This indicates that almost half of the librarians chose the profession because of the nature of work involved in library and information services.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, one can conclude that, librarians' job description was positively related to their choice of library and information service as a career in tertiary institutions. This goes to state that the nature of work that determine librarians' choice of library profession are dynamic and susceptible to changes as the economy, availability of information and public awareness alters. The implication of the findings is that we live in a society where the country's economy continues to expand following upsurge in technological advancements. Thus, the nature of many jobs changes and the techniques of its provision to individuals become important. The role of librarians in nation building cannot however be over-emphasised. The findings of the study confirm Frank Parson's Trait/Factor theory and J. L. Holland's (1997) personality theory that the individual possesses a unique pattern of traits, such as interests, values, abilities and personality characteristics, which help them become aware of their chances of success or failure in choosing a particular career.

Recommendations

From the result of this study, the following recommendation is made:

1. The study found that there is a moderately high positive correlation between nature of work and librarians' choice of library profession. The researcher therefore recommends that librarians in tertiary institutions should administer various levels of tasks, services and

privileges to faculty, students, alumni and the public. This will in turn serve as a source of inspiration that will attract people to choose the library profession as a career in tertiary institutions.

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