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Evaluation of Entrepreneurship Awareness and Skills among LIS Students in Universities in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the entrepreneurship awareness and skills among Library and Information Science (LIS) students in two Nigerian Universities. In Nigeria, the overcrowded job market is forcing thousands of graduates into unemployment and its associated consequences of kidnapping, drug addiction, youth restiveness and general poor standard of living. This has made it imperative that graduates be equipped with skills that are required to achieve self-reliance. With appropriate skills, LIS students as information professionals will be at the vanguard of information generation and reaping its employment opportunities in libraries, companies and corporate organizations. Specifically examined in this paper were the level of entrepreneurship awareness and characteristics of an entrepreneur, LIS entrepreneurship opportunities created by information and communications technology (ICT), LIS modern and entrepreneurship skills, problems associated with entrepreneurship and skills in LIS and the strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship awareness and skills in LIS. Descriptive survey design was adopted in which one hundred and ten (110) final year and masters students of the department of library and information science in the two Universities were purposively sampled using a researcher-structured questionnaire. Frequency tables, means and simple percentages were used to analyze data. Findings showed that up to 70% of the students were not aware of entrepreneurship opportunities within LIS. Moreover these students are yet to develop the culture and mindset toward entrepreneurship, because of inadequate

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education and training. The paper recommends that entrepreneurship courses and practical training in various aspects of ICT be included in the LIS curriculum.

Introduction

In a developing economy like Nigeria, the state of unemployment has given rise to increased rural urban migration for job opportunities. Most developing countries have similar economic conditions whereby government is heavily relied upon as the sole provider of the means of production and livelihood. Moreover, youth restiveness, coupled with high incidences of criminality alongside high poverty levels have resulted in declining standards of living.

Given the above indices, government alone is handicapped as the sole provider of the means of production and Labour. However, economic self-reliance appears to be the only recourse in addressing these associated problems. Hence the increased interests in entrepreneurial careers and education in colleges and universities all over the world. The study of entrepreneurship has relevance today not only because it helps entrepreneurs better fulfill their personal need but because of economic contributions of the new venture. The term "entrepreneurship" has been viewed from different conceptual perspectives although all revolves around innovation/creativity, competency, risk taking, self-reliance and rewards. In the context of this work, entrepreneurship may be considered as the process through which entrepreneurs create, nurture and grow enterprises using a reasonable degree of initiative, skills and competencies necessary to transform change into opportunities thereby deriving personal satisfaction, monetary rewards and independence. Today the global emphasis on the development of small and medium scale enterprises can only succeed if it is bed rocked on strong entrepreneurial skills.

Librarianship today has arrived at the information age where the role of information is increasingly emphasized as an economic resource, a marketable commodity and a social wealth. That is why Stiglitz, an American economist, won the Nobel Prize for recognizing and including information as the fifth factor of production. Information now plays the role of creating power and wealth and technological innovations have given rise to new ideas relating to collection, processing and dissemination of information. Thus the rapid technological development has affected every facet of library operations and services such as acquisition of documents, management of serials, circulation systems, inter library loan, and data processing.

The continuous high generation of information in all sectors of human activity through search and innovation has also brought about drastic changes in the present society. Moreover Parson (1990) maintains that information and communications technology (ICT) has dramatically altered the structure of markets in many industries and corporate organizations. Hence the race for competitive advantage is shifting from a natural resource and industrial production base to a knowledge and information base. These have led to an expansion in the roles of information professionals in diverse ways with a shift from a document management perspective to an information management perspective which locates users, technology and information professionals within a socially constructed complex context. As a result, there is also a corresponding expansion in the employment market for library and information professionals. For the success of library and information centers as effective communication systems, the development of manpower to operate in diverse information settings has become vital. One of the aspects of manpower development in this regard is an improved education system in which LIS students will be equipped with the skills, attitudes and values that are necessary for improved library services and coping with increasing entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT.

But Igbeka (2008) stated that Nigeria is gradually awakening to the importance of entrepreneurship development in the tertiary institutions. The curricula of many institutions are still traditional with no practical programs on entrepreneurship and technological innovations. Although librarians are traditionally associated with collections of books, modern librarians deal with information in many formats such as compact discs, video tapes, bibliographic databases and internet resources. Moreover, while there is a growing clientele for advanced technological services, it is far too difficult for most library school programs to provide training at both ends of the spectrum. The library has an extremely limited resource base which

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prohibits the creation of awareness of entrepreneurship for library and information science students. However, beyond university level education, librarians have critical need for basic and continuing education such as training institutes with programs that support such opportunities for librarians through seminars and symposia. If librarians do not acquire skills, other professionals from computer sciences and engineering will step into their core areas of work specialization and usurp their opportunities. This is because skills have become both generic and multidisciplinary in this fast paced digital age. Cross disciplinary qualifications imply that some people without a basic background in librarianship may acquire basic information management skills either by further training or lessons from work experience and so can go into information management (Omekwu, 2009).

In essence, information technology and management have become synonymous with librarians and information professionals. For them to key into the dynamism of change, they must strive to improve on their overall skills through the acquisition of various forms of ICT skills and develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset in order to render quality services in the library, achieve self-employment and remain relevant.

In view of the numerous challenges already mentioned, this study aims at assessing the entrepreneurship awareness and skills among students of library and information science in Enugu and Anambra, states of Nigeria, with the aim of motivating and equipping students with the right attitude and skills necessary for personal survival and advancement in the face of ICT opportunities and a retarding economic situation.

Statement of the Problem

The high level of unemployment and its associated social ills have been traced to poor entrepreneurship and skills development among students in tertiary institutions. This is manifested in a number of deficiencies that these graduates exhibit in their work places such as: lack of analytical and ICT skills; lack of entrepreneurial and problem solving/decision making skills; inadequate technical skills; and ignorance in the use of modern equipment. Now that government is handicapped as the sole provider of the means of production and labour, it has become imperative to embark on competency based education and entrepreneurship awareness as a means through which graduates can convert their education into an intellectually productive venture. With increased information generation and usage in this information age, the roles for librarians as well as their job market have expanded. This requires LIS students to acquire knowledge in the various aspects of ICT which will empower them to offer quality services in the library and reap the numerous entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT and high information generation. The problem of the study, therefore, is to examine the level of entrepreneurship awareness and skills among LIS students in Nigerian Universities since the possession of these skills has become imperative in the 21st century.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the entrepreneurship awareness and skills possessed by LIS students with the aim of motivating them to acquire skills necessary to operate in 21st century libraries and embrace entrepreneurship as a viable means of combating the rising unemployment challenges.

The specific purposes include to:

1. Examine LIS Students' level of awareness of entrepreneurship
2. Examine the skills possessed by LIS which are necessary for entrepreneurship
3. Examine the problems associated with acquisition of entrepreneurship skills in LIS
4. Examine the strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship awareness and skills in LIS

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study

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1. What is the student's level of awareness of entrepreneurship within LIS?
2. What are the LIS skills possessed by students which are necessary for self-employment?
3. What are the problems associated with acquisition of entrepreneurship skills by LIS students?
4. What are the strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship awareness and skills in LIS?

Review of Related Literature

Evidence from the curricula of many institutions has shown that LIS courses are still traditional with no practical programs on entrepreneurship and technological innovations (Igbeka 2008). The author also rightly stated that while there is a growing clientele for advanced technological services, it is far too difficult for most library school programs to provide training at both ends of the spectrum. This is because the library schools training infrastructure has an extremely limited resource base which prohibits the creation of awareness of entrepreneurship for library and information science students.

Skills are abilities or proficiencies required of a person in a position to plan and execute an action geared at accomplishing some tasks or achieving some goals. Skills are the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined tasks with the minimum outlay of time and energy. For the purpose of this work, LIS students should acquire the professional and managerial skills as a basic step towards successful entrepreneurship venture.

Professional skills include:

- Information technology skills : These include networking, library automation and digitization, web based services, reprography, micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation and management systems including CDS,ISIS,LIBSYS, content development, desktop publishing, intranet, presentation, hardware/software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitate the indexing and retrieval of information and thesaurus development. Farkas (2006) noted some specific technical skills like HMTL, network administration, PHP and MYSQL, efficient use of search engines, use of blogs to provide services, web cast and search skills.
- Information literacy skills: These have to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently and using information accurately and creatively. Also included here is the economics and marketing of information products and services, information resource management, information processing and organizing, e-mail, multimedia perspectives and video conferencing. Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning and enables learners to master content and extend their investigations to become more self-directed, thereby assuming greater control over their own learning.

Other skills include:

- Managerial skills: These are the business management skills such as marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal setting, decision making, human relations and managing growth. They are essential in launching and growing a new venture. Embedded here is also the knowledge of records management principles and electronic book keeping.
- Personal entrepreneurial skills: These include inner control/discipline, risk taking, innovativeness, change orientation and ability to manage change, persistence, and visionary leadership.
- Technical skills: Written and oral communication, interpersonal, monitoring environment, the ability to organize, and network building. These skills form the basis of the modular approach to an entrepreneurship curriculum. Farkas (2006) noted that by laying out the modules, a course or sequence of courses can be developed depending on the needs, interests, and resources of the particular department. This approach will help to ensure that the most important areas of the field are covered in the courses offered.

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A particular example is that even though most universities in Nigeria have developed a centre for entrepreneurship research and development for their institutions, most Library and information science departments have yet to develop an entrepreneurship curriculum that aligns with the demands of the profession. In addition, entrepreneurs frequently do not know how to interface with all necessary entities such as banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors and advertising agencies. There is a lack of entrepreneurial spirit and culture, confidence and determination and fear of competition and failure. The fears may have arisen out of the lack of basic entrepreneurship training which would enable them to identify and harness the abundant opportunities available in their environment. They also lack adequate support, motivation and financial assistance from parents and guardians. Moreover, because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the new information jobs, LIS no longer has a monopoly on controlling entry to the profession or to the job market. Now that ICT convergence changes the nature of information creation, storage and communication, information provision appears in a variety of contexts. Librarians need to understand the effect of new technology on the labour market and the demand for information services and how any changes in the way libraries provide services will affect all stake holders.

The fact remains that traditional roles are becoming less frequent in the array of entrepreneurial careers now open to information professionals. An assortment of different competencies, skills and graduate qualities is required to suit such opportunities. For example, the work required in a physical institution like a library is different from that required for managing virtual information flows in intelligent, learning, networked organizations. In this context, the role of the librarian is much more important; he or she will have to act as a facilitator, advisor, consultant, navigator, searcher, researcher, evaluator, organizer, preserver, communicator, technical expert as well as a manager, leader, entrepreneur and visionary. In essence, education for LIS is no longer technical, but must include new cognitive, social and situational processes (Farkas,2006).

The task of sensitizing, motivating and molding an entrepreneurial graduate requires the active involvement and participation of the lecturers and the university administration, private sector organizations, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and youth oriented individuals. This could be done through the creation of educational and skill acquisition training programs in their various capacities for students to gain knowledge and skills capable of spurring them to start up and manage an enterprise of their own. In the university system, curricula should be restructured and articulated to accommodate entrepreneurship not only as a general, but also as a departmental course to take care of the managerial and professional components of entrepreneurship respectively. As such, it has become necessary for the university lecturer to retool and re-equip himself with modern technological tools in order to give practical orientation to every lecture and make students active participants. In the library and information science departments in particular, all forms of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment should be put in place to enhance the training and acquisition of skills in knowledge and information management, book publishing, bibliotherapy, abstracting and indexing etc. Revitalizing the student's industrial work scheme which has been distorted by a multiplicity of problems is another strategy for students to acquire practical industrial training through industrial attachment. This will help to achieve in a cost effective manner the objectives of the student's industrial work experience (SIWES) and facilitate bridging the gap between industry needs and theoretical knowledge in science and technology. There should also be continuing education programs for working professionals. With this, the quality of LIS professionals that will be fully compatible with requirements of the expanding job market will emerge. In addition, they will utilize maximally the entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT thereby combating the rising unemployment challenges.

The types and quality of education received sometimes do not develop the specific skills needed in the venture creation management process. Most universities in Nigeria have developed a centre for entrepreneurship research and development for their institutions, most library and information science departments are yet to develop an entrepreneurship curriculum that aligns with the demands of the profession. In addition, entrepreneurs frequently do not know how to interface with all necessary entities such as banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors and advertising agencies. There is lack of entrepreneurial spirit and culture, confidence and determination and fear of competition and failure. These fears may have arisen out of lack of basic entrepreneurship training which would enable

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them to identify and harness the abundant opportunities available in their environment. They also lack adequate support, motivation and financial assistance from parents and guardians. Moreover, because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the new information jobs, LIS no longer has monopoly on controlling entry to the profession or to the jobs.

Research Method

The study is a research survey which employed the descriptive design. The population comprised all final year and master of library and information science students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, the total population of which is 110. Questionnaires were distributed to the entire population of 110, and 84 useable questionnaires were retrieved.

Data Presentation and Analysis

R Q 1

Entrepreneurship awareness in LIS

S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO
1	I became aware of entrepreneurship through pleasure reading and public lectures.	63	21
2	I became aware of entrepreneurship through the media.	30	48
3	Entrepreneurship is among the general courses offered	69	6
4	Entrepreneurship is among the departmental courses offered	6	66
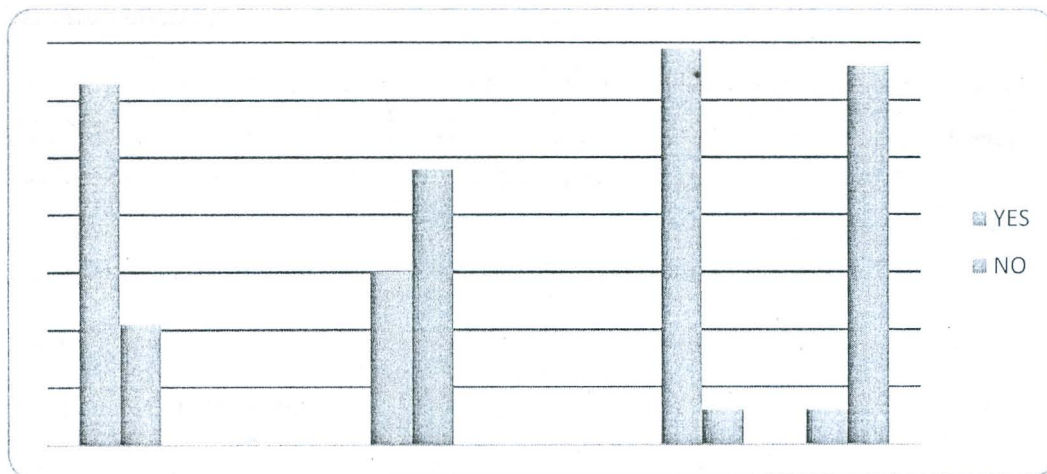
Figure 1 shows that students are aware of entrepreneurship through pleasure reading, the media or as one of the general courses offered but not offered at the departmental level.

R Q 2

Extent of agreement on the characteristics of an entrepreneur

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Dec

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5	An entrepreneur must have clear, realistic and achievable goals and procedures.	75	6	0	0	3.92	A
6	An entrepreneur may not bother to acquire more knowledge as long there is progress in the business.	3	18	30	30	1.92	R
7	An entrepreneur has a reasonable degree of initiative, imagination, skills & creativity.	36	39	6	3	3.2	A
8	An entrepreneur can create his/her own business without any basic entrepreneurship skills or expertise.	21	24	27	12	2.6	A
9	An entrepreneur can establish business or render to any group of people and succeed.	27	42	9	3	3.14	A
10	An entrepreneur has a lot of organizational abilities with efficient management skills.	21	51	3	0	3.22	A
11	An entrepreneur is not afraid of taking risks but has confidence & determination to succeed.	51	24	3	0	3.61	A
12	An entrepreneur searches for opportunities & makes good use of them to promote business and income.	51	24	0	0	3.69	A
13	An entrepreneur should never be afraid of economic uncertainties and high probability of failure.	27	36	15	6	3.00	A
14	An entrepreneur is good at bringing together components of a business venture & considerate in working with the public.	15	57	3	0	3.16	A
15	An entrepreneur do not have the potential to be successful unless supported by government or individuals.	9	15	30	30	2.03	R
16	An entrepreneur is not in control of anybody and so can work at his/her leisure.	30	12	36	6	2.78	A
17	An entrepreneur reaps a huge financial reward & prestige, becomes self-reliant and independent as the business progresses.	39	30	12	3	3.25	A

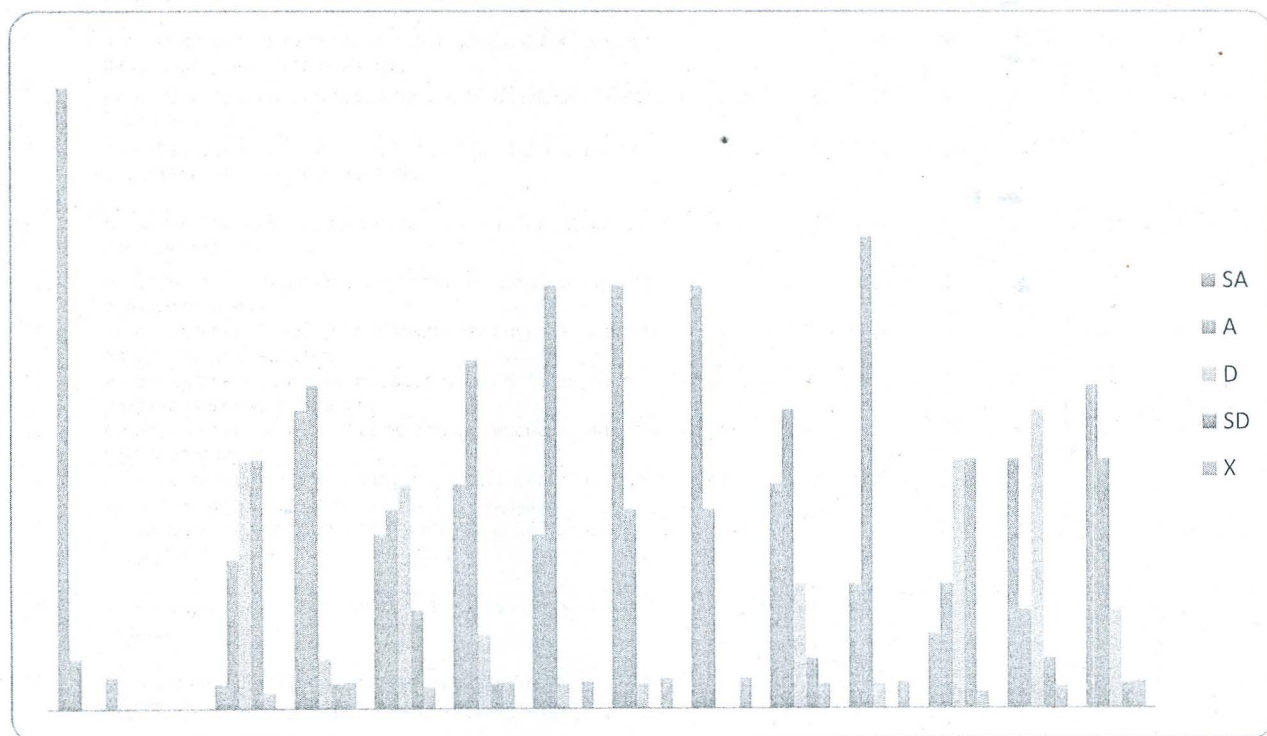
Figure 2 shows that students generally agree on the characteristics of an entrepreneur.

R Q 3

Extent of ability on LIS professional skills using ICT

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S/N	ITEMS	VGE	GE	LE	NA	X	D
18	Abstracting & indexing	15	18	33	12	2.46	R
19	Online cataloguing	42	18	27	0	3.17	A
20	Desk top publishing	15	6	30	24	2.16	R
21	Networking/internet services	24	27	24	6	2.85	A
22	Creating a web (web) design	9	18	12	33	2.04	R
23	Information literacy skills	21	39	15	3	3.00	A
24	Knowledge management skills	15	36	21	0	2.91	A
25	Information brokerage	6	24	36	9	2.36	R
26	Owning a bookshop	15	15	9	33	2.16	R
27	Digitization skills	9	15	33	24	2.11	R
28	Hardware/software selection & analysis	6	30	30	18	2.28	R
29	Editing & directory compilation.	15	9	45	12	2.33	R
30	Information technology skills	12	42	21	3	2.80	A
31	Establishing & maintaining libraries for organizations.	18	39	18	9	2.78	A
32	Bibliotherapy	12	24	21	21	2.34	R

- Abstracting & indexing
- Online cataloguing
- Desk top publishing
- Networking/internet services
- Creating a web (web) design
- Information literacy skills
- Knowledge management skills
- Information brokerage
- Owning a bookshop
- Digitization skills
- Hardware/software selection & analysis
- Editing & directory compilation.
- Information technology skills
- Establishing & maintaining libraries for organizations.
- Bibliotherapy

Figure 3 shows that although some students have knowledge of some of the skills, greater majority have little or no knowledge of all the skills represented.

R Q 4

Extent of awareness on the roles of entrepreneurship in the economy

S/N	ITEMS	VGE	GE	LE	NA	X	D
33	Entrepreneurship is a means of creating jobs and wealth for both young and old.	51	27	3	3	3.12	A
34	It serves as an opportunity for one to show ones talent & do what one loves doing.	54	21	9	0	3.42	A
35	It serves as an alternative to the meager income in paid employment.	45	24	9	6	3.28	A
36	It serves as a means of bridging the gap between science & the market place.	9	42	12	21	2.46	R
37	It serves as a means of interfacing with such entities as	15	45	9	12	2.66	A

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			SA	A	D	SD	X	A
	banks, NGOs and government.							
38	It is a way of maximizing the usage of ones time for oneself.	33	30	12	3	3.19	A
39	It serves as a link in the process of innovation, development and economic growth.	51	30	3	0	3.5	A
40	It is a way of deriving personal satisfaction in business and overcoming poverty.	45	24	15	0	3.35	A

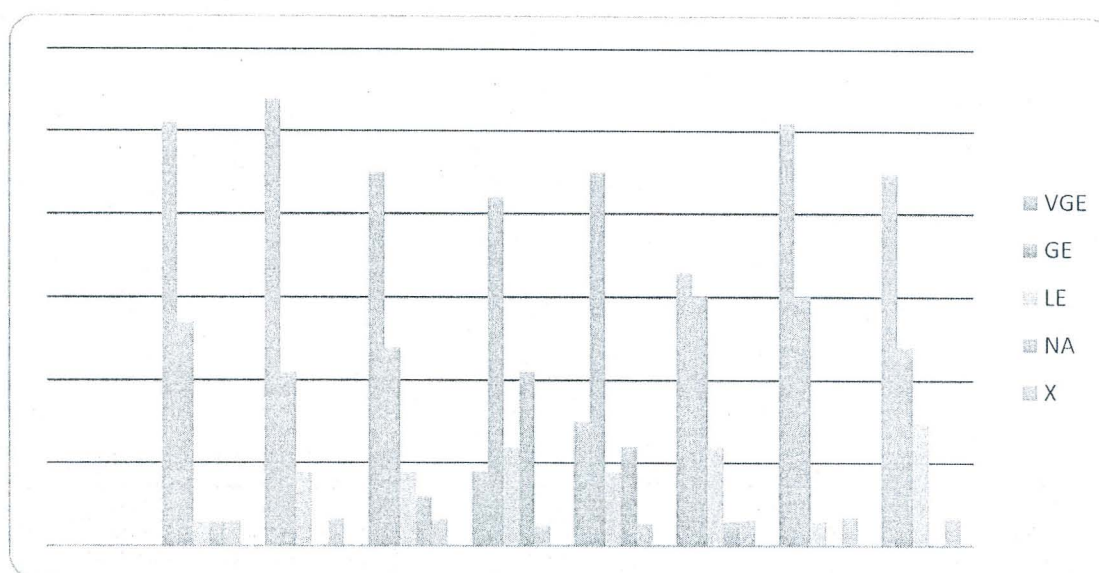Students generally agree on the roles of entrepreneurship in economic development.

Figure 4

R Q 5

Extent of agreement on the problems associated with entrepreneurship and skills in LIS.

| S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	D
41	Inadequate qualified teachers with suitable professional experience.	33	36	9	3	3.22	A
42	Inadequate ICT facilities and training	33	36	6	0	3.28	A
43	Students are more interested in paid employment & so do not want to develop entrepreneurship spirit & culture.	27	33	21	0	3.48	A
44	It is difficult to secure the financial support necessary to start a business venture.	33	42	6	0	3.33	A
45	Financial institutions normally require collateral before offering loan to start a new business.	33	45	3	0	3.37	A
46	The zeal to get rich quickly do not allow graduates to pass through the requirements of entrepreneurship.	36	36	6	0	3.38	A
47	Inadequate university programs do not prepare students for entrepreneurship.	12	36	21	6	2.72	A
48	Huge sums of money is required for further entrepreneurial training after graduation.	15	21	36	6	2.75	A
49	Many graduates are afraid of competition & taking risks in business.	24	36	12	6	3.00	A
50	Many lack self confidence and encouragements & so are afraid of failure.	30	33	15	0	3.19	A
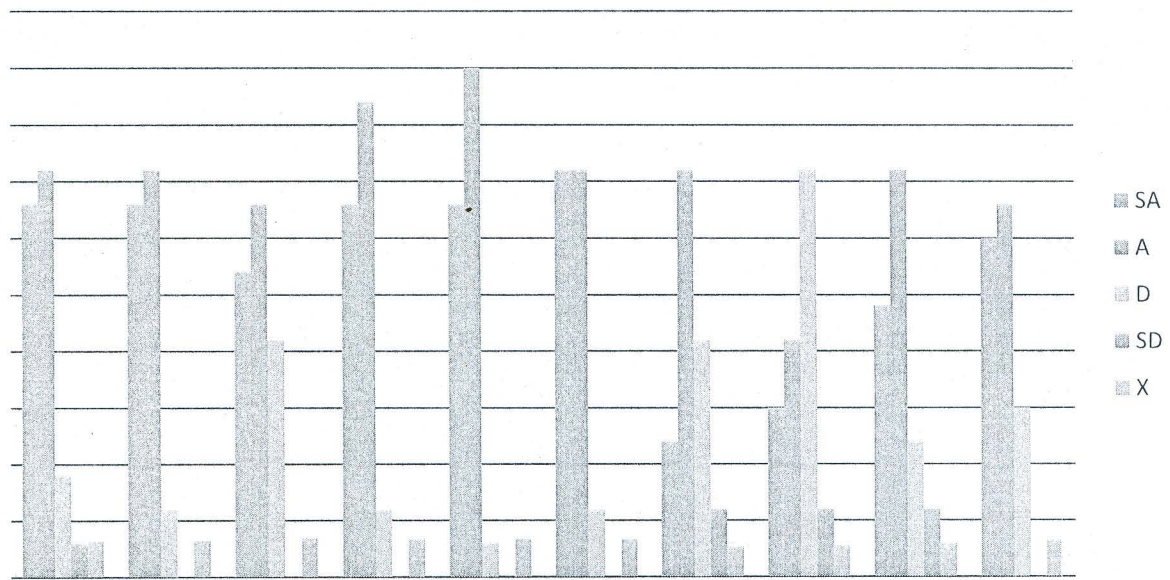
Figure 5 shows that students generally agree on the problems associated with entrepreneurship and skills in LIS.

R Q 6

Strategies to enhance entrepreneurship awareness as skills in LIS.
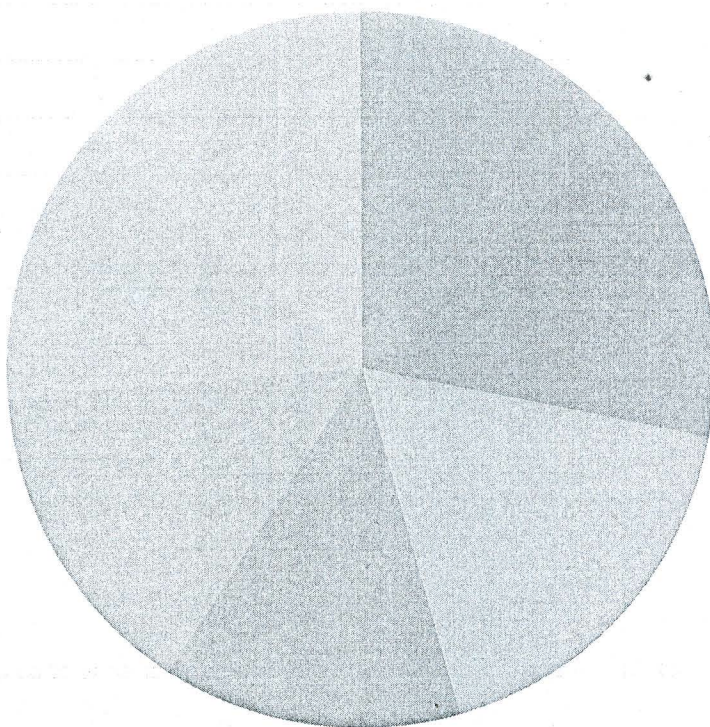
- Restructuring the academic curriculum of LIS profession to accommodate entrepreneurship courses.

- Financial institutions, NGOs, & private sector organizations should offer free entrepreneurship training to students.

- The students industrial work scheme should be revitalized to include entrepreneurship issues.

- Government e t c should provide loans to graduate are worthy to be entrepreneurs.

- Students must avail themselves to training opportunities in the environment.

- Students must maintain state- of –the art in the business through participation at seminars, workshops, journals & trade books.

- Students must recognize changes in their environment & be able to identify business opportunities.

Figure 6 shows that students generally agree on the strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship awareness and skills in LIS.

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Discussion of Findings

Findings show that even though students are aware of entrepreneurship through the media and the general courses they offer, entrepreneurship courses are not offered in the department. In essence, the general courses in entrepreneurship do not satisfy the specific demands of LIS profession. This implies that students do not acquire the relevant skills that can make them compatible with and accessible to the variety of entrepreneurship opportunities in the profession. However, the respondents generally agree on the items on the characteristics of entrepreneurs, the roles of entrepreneurship in economic development. In addition, they also agreed on all items dealing with the problems of entrepreneurship within LIS and the strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship awareness and skills in LIS. In their ability on LIS professional skills, about 60% of the students do not possess the enumerated skills. This agrees with the findings of Igbeka (2008) who stated that there are neither entrepreneurship programs nor ICT practical training in LIS. This goes to also confirm the NUC finding in 2004 that university graduates are not adequately prepared for work on graduation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made in light of the findings:

1. LIS students should begin to undertake courses in entrepreneurship and practical trainings in modern ICT.
2. This implies the restructuring and strengthening of the LIS curriculum to include courses in entrepreneurship and ICT.
3. LIS educators should retool and adopt technology based teaching involving active participation of students.
4. There should be a workshop with an information processing laboratory where students should carry out practical assignments and projects based on real life problems which graduates face in their work places.

Conclusion

The curriculum of the library and information science program in Nigeria should be totally restructured if students will be made to acquire skills that will enable them to have access to the wide variety of entrepreneurship jobs and indeed make a career in information management. This requires educators to re-skill and cope with the new requirements so as to advance the profession to greater heights and retain its relevance and identity in a rapidly developing information society. With this, it has become crucial for the government to provide financial help to LIS schools all over the country to develop the essential infrastructure required to give hands on experience to students.

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