

Students' Roles in Academic Majors

A Survey of the Students with Library and Information Science Majors

Prepared By

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Abstract

Scientific and economic planning are two faces for the same coin. Human resources resulting from education are considered the main drive for different governmental organizations. The levels order, achievement and development are governed by these outputs. Thus, all countries pay due attention to developing education and its quality.

This study, therefore, aims at getting to know the opinions of library and information graduates at Princess Nora Bent Abdul Rahman University. It tends to explore their view points about the curricula they have studied and their areas of improvement. This can enhance improving the major of library and information science at the university. The study employed descriptive and analytical methodologies. The study is conducted through a survey including academic curricula in the field of library and information science at Princess Nora Bent Abdul Rahman University. The study generally found the necessity to reconsider the educational program based on the students' remarks and according to the requirements of labor market in order to achieve the desired interaction and students' satisfaction.

Key Terms:

Developing the field of libraries – educational plan – educational output – labour market.

1) Introduction

The main target of library and information departments is to qualify and prepare personnel to work in library and information sectors in order to support the process of information development and national and international knowledge – based society. Here emerges the importance of qualification and the structure library and information major owing to the need for qualified specialists who are able to do their jobs skillfully. Such jobs require distinguished academic specialization and qualification to perform knowledge and information based processes. Thus, reconsidering qualification programs has become a persistent need to ensure the quality and effectiveness of library and information education, which are determined according to information technology updates, and the development of information organizations and the career in general. One of the basis on which the development process rests is recognizing students' opinions about the courses they studied to reveal the points of strength and areas of improvement in the current educational plan.

2) Study Problem

Qualifying graduates to work in information institutions such as libraries and information centres in order to cope with new technologies that such institutions witness perpetually has become increasingly important. This, in addition to the users' requirements that include getting updated information service that suit their continuously renewed information needs. This, in turn, reveals the importance of qualifying professionals who are able to achieve their tasks efficiently and in a manner that suit the changes occurring in library and information sectors. This draws attention to reconsidering current programs used in library and information departments and the extent to which it can face future challenges posed by this job. Thus, the current study is based upon a survey conducted to get the opinions of the students about the courses they do at library and information department at Princess Nora Bent Abdul Rahman University. The survey focused on two main points: the first was an evaluation of how effective the courses are and the other was how can these courses be developed according to students' opinions.

3) Significance of the Study

This study is particularly significant because it tackles the scientific development of library and information departments based on students' views. Students are considered a sincere measurement of the educational

departments' performance and the focus of the educational process itself. They are also an indicator of the modern orientations towards comprehensive quality of education and a basis for implementing new developments and the changes desired of the educational process. Moreover, this study helps those in charge to update the curricula in order to achieve the academic efficiency required to support the factors of educational satisfaction in a way that suits the requirements of the age and the students' needs and orientations towards education.

4) Study Goals:

This study aims at achieving a number of goals, the most prominent of which are:

- Identifying educational curricula that students consider useful in the current educational plan. .1
- Identifying students' evaluations of the curricula they have studied. .2
- Identifying students' suggestions to develop the educational curricula that they have studied. .3

5) Study Methodology and Population

The study depended on analytical and descriptive methods that were used to describe the program used in library and information department Princess Nora Bent Abdul Rahman University. This method was used to analyze and evaluate the items included in the program based on the opinions of the students enrolled in this program. A form that includes all the courses taught within the program was designed. Copies of this form were distributed among the senior students in the program. Such a form was used to identify the students' opinions within two perspectives: courses evaluation and development suggestions. It is noteworthy that the number of in the eighth and final level in the department of library and information at Princess Nora Bent Abdul Rahman University is (110 students). Only 20 students participated in this study, although the forms were distributed among more than 50 students.

6) Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University: An Overview

Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University is one concerned with educating girls in Saudi Arabia. It is one aspect of King Abdullah's interest in higher education for women. It was founded in 1390- 1970. It first included one college which was the faculty of education for girls. Then, a number of colleges were inaugurated until they become 102 college across 72 Saudi cities. On Wednesday, 29- 10 – 1429, the university was honored with having the Saudi King laid the corner stone for the campus. The university name them was changed to "Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University". It was named after the sister of the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdul Rahman. The university currently includes 13 colleges. These are Information and Computer, Science, Business, Education, Art and Design, Language and Translation, Social Working, the Institute of Teaching Arabic Language, Nursing, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Arts and Health. The department of library and information, which is the focus of this study, is found within the faculty of arts.

7) Analysis and Evaluation of Courses Taught at Library and Information Department based on Students

Viewpoints

Developing library and information departments has become a necessity posed by the changes in the current events and future vision which libraries and information centres undergo. These changes seek to fulfill continuous users' needs. Thus, this study has analysed the courses offered in library and information department at Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University, using a particular form. Students in the eighth level were asked to give their opinions about these curricula. The answers were given in tables (1-2-3) as follows:

Tables (1-2-3) show that the discrepancy of students' responses concerning their evaluation of the importance of these courses. The tables also show students' suggestions to develop the courses. Obviously, most students consider that the most useful courses as indicated by more than 50% of the students were:

Children' literature and their libraries. This course is taught in the third level as indicated by more than 80% (1 of the respondents.

- Descriptive Cataloguing (Part II). This course is taught in the third level. Indexing and extraction, which is taught in the sixth level. Library and information centres management and special topic. More than 70% of the students stated that these courses were useful and important. (2)
- Introduction to indexing, library and information centres services, and field training (part II). More than 60% of the respondents have emphasized the importance of these courses. (3)
- Descriptive cataloguing (part I); classifying information media and information networks. More than 55% of the respondents emphasized the importance of these courses. (4)
- Arabic manuscript and field training (part I). More than 50% of the respondents emphasized the importance of these courses. (5)

These results are highly significant. Many studies all over the Arab world and worldwide have indicated that the students' satisfaction with the importance of educational curricula and their usefulness is an important factor that leads to better education. ^(1,2,3)

Concerning the curricula that respondents indicated that they were not presented appropriately by the professor, had low percentages. This, in turn means that students are to a great extent satisfied with the department staff. The highest percentages referred to courses such as managing current documents which is taught in the sixth level, and web services which is taught in level eight. This is in addition to information networks and information exploration in English and field training (part I) which are all taught in the seventh level. It is noteworthy here that the standard of students' satisfaction with the professor should be dealt with very carefully. Students might believe that the professor who simplifies the curriculum and gives higher marks is the perfect professor. However, due attention should be paid to students' opinions in this area. Most studies concerning this issue have shown that students usually focus on the teachers' ability to teach effectively and the availability of specialists in different majors.

Moving to students' suggestions concerning modifying the educational plan of current curricula, it is found that the deleting a course was the least item indicating by students. The course that most students wanted to delete was introduction to Diplomats. More than 45% of the respondents had recommended deleting this course. Next to Diplomats was history of books and libraries, and governmental publications. More than 40% of the respondents had recommended deleting these courses. The previous results indicate that students do not really like subjects that include historical backgrounds.

Concerning the modification of curricula, most responses indicated (40%) that the indexing and extraction course is the one that needs most modifications. The researcher argues that the respondents are totally justified in their suggestion because the items included in the course do need development.

Adding an aspect of practical application and training to different courses was welcomed by many respondents. The course that was believed to be in most need for this was libraries' auto systems which is taught in the fifth level. This was stated by 65% of the respondents. The researcher agrees with this viewpoint, since students cannot fully acquire the skills needed to deal with auto systems without practical application. Moreover, training is one of the basic principles required to equip an information specialist with the necessary skills.

As for developing the course professor, students seem to be highly satisfied with this item. Actually, only few respondents had referred to it. Yet the highest percentage that believe that professors need development was 40% and this was confined to the course of information networks and field training (20%). The researcher argues that the students may be right here since network course requires very high computer skills. Also, owing to the name of the course, students expect that it will be presented in way similar to that in which computers are taught. As for field training the researcher also argues that students were right in their suggestion since the course is usually delivered by demonstrators who certainly are less experienced than staff.

9) Results and Recommendations:

1-9 Results

This study aimed at recognizing students' role in developing academic majors. This was done by means of a survey conducted on students at the library and information department. A form that includes all the courses taught within the program was designed. Copies of this form were distributed among the senior students in the program. Such a form was used to identify the students' opinions within two perspectives: courses evaluation and development suggestions. The results were as follows:

- Students consider interactive and practical courses as the most useful. Courses indicated include children's literature and libraries, descriptive cataloguing, Arabic manuscript, indexing and extraction, library and information centres management, special topic, introduction to classification, library and information centres services and field training. .1
- The study revealed general satisfaction with professors, since the percentage referring to this item was very low. The highest percentage indicated courses of current documents management, information networks, web services, information in English and field training (part I). The researcher stated that such standard should be dealt with very carefully. Students might believe that the professor who simplifies the curriculum and gives higher marks is the perfect professor. Moreover, some students may attribute their failure to the professor. .2
- Students did not suggest deletion of many courses. However, the courses that were suggested to delete show that students do not like courses with historical backgrounds or theoretical frameworks. .3
- It is obvious that students were right in their suggestion to modify some courses. The highest percentage refers to indexing and extraction to which the researcher highly agrees. .4
- The study revealed those students are looking forward to adding a training aspect to most theoretical courses and increase training where it already exists. .5
- Students were highly satisfied with the item of developing professors; the highest percentage was 40 % for information networks and 30% for field training. The researcher agrees to this item since she believes that both courses require a skilful and highly experienced professor. .6

2- 9 Recommendations

- Having the results of this study discussed by those in charge of the department program to consider the suggestions offered by the students. (1)
- Inviting and encouraging scholars to conduct further studies that explore students' opinions concerning the courses they are doing, and to hold objective comparisons using standards that are acknowledged both nationally and worldwide that can help in categorizing college departments according to the students' ranking of their majors. (2)
- Committees of educational programs should be concerned with getting students' opinions about the courses regularly and do the necessary modifications. (3)

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