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Students' Sustained Interest to Pursue Further Education in the Same Discipline: A Case of Students of Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University, Kenya

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Abstract. The study focused on students' sustained interest, which is the interest they initially had when they enrolled for Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University. The interest was sustained throughout the diploma course. The guiding question: Is interest to pursue studies in Library and Information Studies sustained beyond one's graduation with Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University? The target population comprised 51 graduates of Diploma in Library and Information Studies for a period of three years (2021, 2022 and 2023). The 15 graduates of 2023 were sampled for the study. The study design was quantitative survey. The data was analysed by using simple percentages. The findings showed that 100% of graduates who responded are interested in degree studies in library and information science and 85.7% wished to study the same at Rongo University. Love for Rongo University and sustained interest to continue with the same course at degree level were authenticated. The findings have implications for the University which might be advantaged when it mounts courses in library science. More research can be undertaken for other courses in the University or elsewhere to ascertain their feasibilities and if there is sustained interest.

Key words: Certificate in library and Information Studies; Diploma in Library and Information Studies; Graduand; Sustained interest

Introduction

This paper is divided into five parts, numbered 1 to 5. Part one is the introduction. In the introduction a brief historical background of Rongo University is given. The introduction also situates the study at Rongo University.

Part 2 states the problem of investigation. The problem focuses on students, referred to as graduands, who graduated from Rongo University with Diploma in Library and Information Studies in 2023.

Part 3 reviews relevant literature and part 4 explains the methodology which is an online quantitative survey. In part 5, results are presented and discussed. In the same way the paper starts with an introduction, it ends with a conclusion.

1. Background and Situating the Study

Historically the name "Rongo University" came into being in 2016 when it was given a charter by President Uhuru Kenyatta. Initially it was known as Kitere Craft Learning Centre. The Centre was started in 1970s by the local community. With the help of the local community, President Daniel Arap Moi elevated the Centre to Moi Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1983, offering various courses below degree. In 2007 MIT became a satellite college of Moi University and in 2016 it attained university status. It is one of the 35 public universities in Kenya. Certificate and diploma courses it used to offer before attaining university status are still offered although they may be phased out in future.

The paper uses the term "graduands" referring to the students who graduated from the University in the three years (2021, 2022 and 2023) and their names are contained in the Rongo

University graduation booklets. Students who enrolled for the certificate and diploma courses but did not graduate are not considered.

This paper investigated whether final year students studying for a two-year Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University, Kenya were willing to study the same discipline when they pursue further studies after their course. This study is prompted by the fact that within a span of three years (2021, 2022 and 2023), the largest number of students (54%) who enrolled for certificates at the University studied for Certificate in Library and Information Studies, which is one of the five courses at certificate level, whereas Diploma in Library and Information Studies which is one of the 14 diploma courses offered at the university was studied by 18% of the enrolled diploma students. Diploma in Library and Information Studies is the second popular diploma course at the University. The most popular diploma course at the University is Diploma in Special Needs Education which averagely accounts for 18% of all the diploma courses. This information is summarized in the table below, which summarises the percentage of granduands with Diploma in Library and Information Studies and Certificate in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University within a period of three years (2021-2023).

Table 1. Rongo University: Data focusing on Graduands for Certificate in Library and Information Studies and Diploma in Library and Information Studies for Three Years

	Certificate				**Diploma**				
Year	NO.	GRAD	Av.NO.	GRAD&%	NO.	GRAD	Av.NO.	GRAD&%	SNE
2021	5	50	10	26(52%)	14	96	7	23(24%)	25(26%)
2022	5	50	10	24(48%)	14	98	7	13(15%)	19(19%)
2023	5	39	8	24(62%)	14	98	7	15(13%)	19(19%)
Tot.	**15**	**139**	**18**	**74(54%)**	**42**	**292**	**21**	**51(17%)**	**63(22%)**
Av.	5	46	9	25(54%)	14	97	7	17(18%)	21(22%)

For clarity, the table is explained. The table has two major sections: certificate and diploma. The first column shows the three years the study was undertaken for both certificate and diploma. Each year had graduation day with graduands. The second column on the certificate side shows the number (NO.) of certificate courses. Five certificate courses were offered each year by the University and this translated to accumulated number of 15 courses. On the average, five certificate courses were offered by the University every year.

The third column on the certificate side shows the total number of graduands (GRAD) per year for certificate courses. Both 2021 and 2022 had each 50 graduands but in 2023 the number was 39, totaling 139 certificate graduands for the three years. On the average, there were 46 graduands per each Certificate course.

The fourth column shows the average number of graduands per certificate course in Library and Information Studies. In both 2021 and 2022, each year had an average of 10 graduands with Certificate in Library and Information Studies and in 2023 the number was eight.

In the fifth column, the total number of graduands and their corresponding percentages (GRAD %) in Certificate in Library and Information Science are provided. In the year 2021 there were 26 graduands for Certificate in Library and Information Studies and this accounted for 52% of those who graduated with certificate from the University. In the year 2022 there were 24 graduands for Certificate in Library and Information Studies which accounted for 48% of all those who graduated with certificate from the University. For the year 2023, there were also 24 graduands with Certificate in Library and Information Studies but this accounted for 62% of all those who graduated with certificates from the University. For the three years, there

were 74 graduands for Certificate in Library and Information Studies, which accounted for 54% of all the graduands for certificate courses.

Explanation on the Diploma side of the Table is almost similar to that of Certificate side. The first column shows the number (NO.) of diploma courses the University offered for the three years which is 14. The accumulated number of the diploma courses done in three years is 42.

The second column on the Diploma side of the table shows the total number of graduands (GRAD) for all the diploma courses in each of the three years. In the year 2021 there were 96 graduands and both 2022 and 2023 had 98 graduands each, bringing a total of 292 graduands. On the average, each diploma course had 97 graduands. In the third column, each diploma course had seven graduands.

In the fourth column the number of graduands of Diploma in library Studies for each of the three years are provided. In the year 2021, there were 23 diploma graduands for Diploma in Library and Information Studies and this accounted for 24% of all graduands of diploma courses. In the year 2022, there were 13 graduands of Diploma in Library and Information Studies, accounting for 15% of all graduands of diploma courses. In the year 2023, the number of graduands for Diploma in Information Studies was 15 and this accounted for 13% of all diploma graduands of that year. The total number of Diploma in Library and Information Studies for the three years was 51 and this accounted for 17% of all diploma graduands for the same period.

Similar explanations are provided in the fifth column where there are data on Special Needs Education (SNE). Special Needs Education is the most preferred diploma course at the University, showing an average of 63% of all diploma graduands of the University for the period of three years. It is the leading in terms of graduands followed by Diploma in Library and Information Studies at 51%.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Interest as explained by Vulperhorst van der Rijst, Homegaard and Akkerman (2022) is any activity students would wish to identify with and aim at re-engaging with over time. Studies on the interest of students to pursue courses further are important for universities to plan their curricula well. Interest is future-oriented and any course that accommodates the interest of a student is likely to be pursued further.

Paneulos, Lanete-Fabul, and Perez-Ramirez (2023) indicate that job availability, prevailing opportunities for employment and job requirements are key factors in influencing students to make decisions on courses to take at universities but influences from peers, friends and relatives play insignificant roles. The study looked at the new entrants to universities but not the ones within the university system who would wish to continue with their studies from diploma level in either the course they took for diploma or in a different discipline. The study also did not consider personal interests even if the courses have diminished prospects for employment. It may be possible for students to change according to circumstances and tune their course interests to the jobs available.

Stylianou (2024) gives seven factors students consider when choosing courses as cost, course content, teaching and assessment procedures, course duration, international recognition, entry requirements and possibility of further research. This study leaves out personal interest.

It has been noted that choosing a course for a university degree by students is a challenge and students need a lot of support (Vulperhorst et al. (2022). The support given to students enrolling for a course may be believed to take into account students' interest although this is not usually ascertained.

Students who enrolled for Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Rongo University are assumed to have had a passion for the course. When they graduated with

Diploma in Library and Information Studies, it is still assumed that they are interested in the course. It is this interest and its implications for the University that form the core of this paper.

3. The Statement of the Problem

The studies cited did not take into account the interest or the passion of the students for the courses. The same applies to Rongo University where the interest of the learners needs to be investigated in relation to first degree in library studies. There are students who graduated with Diploma in Library and Information Studies in 2023 and it assumed that they have interest to pursue degree courses in library studies. Rongo University does not offer specifically a degree in library and information studies or any other degree in which library as a discipline forms the core component of the certificate awarded at completion. Since Certificate and Diploma in Library and Information Studies are liked by most students, this study investigated whether the students who graduated with diploma in library and information studies have sustained interest to pursue the same course at degree level and at the same University.

4. Methodology

The study used an online survey with questionnaire as a method of collecting data from the students who graduated in 2023. The sample size comprised all the 15 students who graduated with Diploma in Library and Information Studies in 2023. Ten of the students were female and six were male.

The questionnaire sought to find out whether the students, named graduands, were willing and interested to study further library and information studies at degree level at Rongo University. The questionnaire was administered through filling in of the Google form. Before filling in the form, communication with the respondents through emails, mobile phones and WhatsApp was done to ensure earlier preparation.

5. Results and discussion

The questionnaire was sent to all the 15 students who graduated in 2023 with Diploma in Library and Information Studies. The respondents had to fill Google form for data collection. Out of the 15, 12 responded, culminating to a rate 80% returned the questionnaire. Three respondents (25%) out of the 12 indicated their gender as male and seven (58.3%) indicated as female. The remaining two (16.7) indicated their gender as others.

Rate of return of questionnaire is a challenge in research. Wu, Zhao and Fils-Aime (2022) state that online survey returns of questionnaire at 44.1% is generally good and above 50% is excellent. They further note that sending an online survey to many participants does not guarantee a higher response rate. A higher response rate may be achieved through defining and refining the population; pre-contacting and using other forms of communication such as phone calls and emails as reminders might prove more beneficial. Wu et al. (2022) maintain that providing incentives is not very useful. The results can be taken to be valid due to the percentage of the response rate which was at 80%. The greatest challenge was preparing the respondents earlier.

All the 12 respondents graduated with Diploma in Library and Information Studies from Rongo University. The 12 (100%) indicated their passion as library and information studies, which they wish to pursue up to degree level. Out of the 12 respondents, 11 (91.7%) would wish to get their degree at Rongo University whereas one respondent (8.3%) would wish to get the degree elsewhere.

Questions on gender are important. They provide information on how gender is distributed among students and the courses they enroll for. Three out of 12 respondents were males and seven were females, whereas the other two were belonging to other genders. Without delving into the genuineness of the responses, it can be taken that enrollment for Diploma in

Library and Information Studies is gender balanced. The course is not skewed towards a particular gender and this fact can help when mounting the course at degree level.

The interest of the students who graduated from Rongo University with Diploma in Library and Information Studies was still intact and they wished to pursue the same at degree level. Out of the 12 respondents, 11 (91.7) wished to study the same course at degree level at Rongo University. This sustained interest and the continuous love for Rongo University is an asset, especially in mounting the desired course at degree level. It is not always common that one who studied at an institution may wish to continue studying there, going through academic ranks but when some have been identified with love for an institution their love needs to be sustained.

Conclusion

Students who graduated from Rongo University with Diploma in Library and Information Studies have passion for the course and they are interested to study it further at degree level and the University of their choice is Rongo. The study demonstrates students sustained interest in Library and Information studies and their love for their former institution. This augers well for Rongo University which can venture into ways of promoting studies in library and information studies. This study may stimulate research into how students' interest in courses can be sustained and promoted for further studies in the same institutions.

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