

Abstract

Purpose – First, to assess the status of the job market for library and information science (LIS) professionals in Kenya and the adequacy of current curricula and training resources in LIS training institutions in the country. Secondly, to identify priority areas of training and critical IT skills required by LIS professionals in relation to current job market and performance requirements.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a survey research design data was collected from various categories of LIS stakeholders: students, lecturers, professionals and employers. In total 110 subjects were selected for this study using various sampling techniques and a response rate of 76.4 per cent was achieved. Questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data. This was a descriptive study and therefore descriptive statistics were used.

Findings – A job market for LIS professionals in Kenya is perceived to exist. However, there is a general observation that the current LIS training programmes in the country do not sufficiently address current job market requirements due to: inadequate teaching resources in LIS training institutions; lack of adequate ICT content in the courses; courses that are irrelevant to the job market and inadequate length of industrial attachment.

Practical implications – The paper recommends review of the current LIS curricula in Kenya in order to enhance the suitability of graduates to the current labour market. This includes integration of modern ICT into training, recruitment of qualified teaching staff, ensuring adequate learning resources and facilities, and enhancement of industrial attachment.

Originality/value – The paper investigates some of the critical issues that planners of library and information science courses have to consider in the 21st century. These issues include: the emergence of the “information society”, the multidisciplinary heritage of LIS education, the choice between liberal vis-a-vis technical education, the emergence of the concept of digital library, and finally the need for thorough management and leadership competencies. These issues are part of the current discourse on LIS training in the sub-Saharan Africa where communities are in transition to the “information economy”.