

Library and Information Management higher education in Swaziland: a feasibility study

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ABSTRACT

This paper is derived from a study that investigated the feasibility of providing Library and Information Management (LIM) higher education in Swaziland. The study centered on two major concerns / problems facing the country with respect to LIM higher education. First, the dependence by the country on foreign schools to acquire higher education and training, and secondly, the required funding to import such education and training into the country. Also highlighted were issues of the relevance of the imported higher education and training to the country and the major concerns of the government concerning funding for higher education and training in other countries. The study targeted five population groups as follows: Prospective entrants to the LIM profession, existing and practicing LIM personnel, job advertisements for LIM personnel, existing and potential employers of LIM personnel, training institutions likely to host LIM higher education and training.

Both qualitative and quantitative data was obtained using survey questionnaires, interviews, content analysis and observation. Questionnaires gathered data from prospective entrants to the profession of LIM and existing employees / personnel in the profession. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and potential employers in the government and major LIM service organizations. The content analysis of newspaper advertisements was done on two local dailies covering a period of four years (2005 – 2008) to assess the job market in Library and Information Management. Observations were carried out in two higher education institutions to check whether or not they were capable of hosting LIM higher education.

The results revealed that prospective entrants, personnel, employers and the training institutions were in support of higher education in LIM within the country. The content analysis of job advertisements produced low results, which suggests low feasibility, but only if the expectation is that job advertisements for a profession would run every day in a local newspaper. Employers in LIM insisted on the availability of jobs in the local market and highlighted several positive indicators of a growing market in this profession. We conclude the paper with recommendations for hosting education, stakeholder participation, balanced relevance and tracer studies. The literature review for this study has been reported in Mousaion Vol.29 (2).

Keywords: LIM education, LIM training, LIS education and training, Swaziland

1. Introduction

In this paper, we report on a recent feasibility study to establish the possibility of offering Library and Information Management (LIM) education in Swaziland. In this section we

highlight three underlying questions that motivated the study. First, how have Swaziland's library and information professionals been acquiring their higher education? It is noted that Swaziland has a notable number of LIM professionals trained and educated at various levels in librarianship, library and information studies, library and information science, and/or Library and Information Management. Most are employed within the country by university libraries, national and public libraries, college libraries, training institutions' libraries, special libraries, and a few high schools. Ever since Library and Information Management became a recognized and required profession, Swaziland has been sending prospective professionals for LIM higher education in other countries because of lack of such education in the country. Scholarships for prospective students have been [mainly] available for LIM schools situated in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The government, through the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Public Service and Information (MOPSI), has been the main sponsor behind incumbent professionals who have been trained at certificate, diploma, and undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels.

The general norm for pre-training in LIM has been service or attachment with a functioning and recognized library in order to gain hands-on experience and improve the candidate's appreciation for the profession before formal tertiary education. This is largely still the case, with most training professionals having previously served in libraries and information centres first. The pre-training practice has ensured that a large number of professionals who complete their formal higher education in other countries have a secure job with their employer when they return to the country. However, some professionals search for better opportunities with other employers after formal higher education. This leads to the second question, which is why does Swaziland need LIM higher education and training?

We believe that Swaziland is faced with a lot of socio-economic challenges, ranging from illiteracy, to poverty, unemployment and the prevalence of diseases. Libraries and information centres are supposed to be instrumental in the fight against these challenges by providing access to knowledge. Access and use of library resources is largely dependent on the knowledge and skills of information service providers. Information and communication technology (ICT) has a significant influence on library and information services and access. Competence in the use of relevant information service and management tools is very important in terms of assisting and ushering information users into this information age (Johnson, 2007). Lastly, changing expectations and redeployments in the job market have produced new designations, such as knowledge managers, information analysts, multimedia specialists, etc. This means that the market no longer focuses on librarianship issues alone, which makes it (the market) less predictable.

Third, what are the benefits and challenges of obtaining LIM higher education outside Swaziland versus providing it within the country? The education and training of LIM professionals outside Swaziland has a number of benefits. The country's populace has, for example, the opportunity to be educated in well established and reputable LIM schools while experiencing different social and cultural environments, which also contribute towards their personal development and growth. They may also establish out of country contacts and networks that are necessary for their sustainable professional development. However, there are also challenges. One challenge, as observed by Johnson (2007), is the relevance of the education and training received, which is often based on western programs and modelled on developed countries' library environments. Education and training 'abroad' may also increase dependence on the external environment and promote the notion that valuable training can only be obtained from outside. A further challenge is that of cost, as education and training

outside the country requires a considerable amount of money, therefore limiting the number of applicants that may access education and training at a given time.

Essentially we identify two crucial problems. First, Swaziland appears to be ignoring its own local higher education and training programmes in LIM. There is still a lot of dependence on LIM education outside the country. Even though the country has a significant number of formally educated professionals, most are involved with library services and have little to do with LIM education and training as opportunities for education and training are limited. What seems to be most prevalent in certain sectors is the training of library users in information skills and the training of school teachers in basic library management skills in their respective schools. Short-term training through workshops, seminars and certain management centres is also available for working professionals who may be lacking certain skills in information service provision. Longer, examinable educational programs that focus exclusively on LIM do not exist, meaning that even with these short courses and basic skills, the personnel cannot attain tertiary recognizable certification that would develop and promote them to higher positions in their respective fields and/or contribute to better remuneration. Secondly, a lot of money has been spent on the higher education and training of LIM personnel outside the country over the years and the government has been the main sponsor. However in recent years, the government announced a decrease in its scholarship funding and introduced a new criterion of awarding scholarship based on certain priority areas, acceptable institutions, and exceptional academic performance (Ministry of Education Press Statements, 2006 & 2007). This affects LIM professionals in the following ways: LIM and its related disciplines are not included in the priority areas; some LIM schools are not included as approved and acceptable institutions to which the government would provide funding; and exceptional academic performance has not been a requirement to enter into this profession.

The above challenges clearly indicate that it is becoming more and more expensive for the government to fund foreign higher education. And with the relocation of other partners in higher education sponsorship, such as the German Embassy from Swaziland to Mozambique and the British Embassy to South Africa, it has become difficult for prospective candidates to attract willing sponsorship for formal higher education in LIM. The remaining (albeit generous) Embassy of Taiwan in Swaziland focuses mostly on health, medicine and agricultural education scholarships to institutions in Taiwan.

2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the feasibility of providing LIM education and training locally in Swaziland. The study sought to determine if there was a need by all stakeholders (prospective entrants, employees, employers, the professional association, the government, and higher education institutions) for the country to provide its own higher education and training in LIM. In this paper, we respond to the following research questions: i) What is the state of LIM education and training in Swaziland? ii) Is there a need for the education and training of LIM professionals locally in Swaziland? iii) What are the existing educational and training needs of the LIM profession in Swaziland? iv) At what level, if required, should LIM professionals in the country be educated or trained locally? v) Is there demand, among employers and potential employers, for locally educated and trained LIM professionals in Swaziland? vi) Does the infrastructure exist for establishing and sustaining an educational or training programme in LIM in Swaziland? vii) Are there LIM professionals in the country who could be involved in education and training? viii) What are the main opportunities and challenges of providing LIM education and training locally? ix) What could

the role of major stakeholders, such as the government and the Library and Information Professional Association (SWALA), be in providing local education and training?

3. Methodology

The study targeted five population groups as follows:

- Prospective entrants to the LIM profession
- Existing and practicing LIM personnel
- Job advertisements for LIM personnel
- Existing and potential employers of LIM personnel
- Training institutions likely to provide LIM education and training

Qualitative and quantitative data was obtained using survey questionnaires, interviews, content analysis and observation. Questionnaires gathered data from prospective entrants to the profession of LIM and existing employees in the profession. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and potential employers in the government and major LIM organizations. Content analysis was done on newspaper advertisements in two local dailies over a period of four years (2005 - 2008) to assess the LIM job market in Swaziland, while observations were carried out in two higher education institutions to establish whether or not they had the capacity to provide LIM education. Table 1 below provides a useful summary.

Table 1: Relationships between respondents, populations and samples of the study

Respondents	Population	Sample
Prospective entrants to the LIM profession	Four high (senior secondary) schools from the four regions of Swaziland	A randomized sample was used to select 50 percent of the completing pupils per school <i>Completing classes in Public schools in Swaziland range between 70 – 160 pupils per year n = 242</i>
Existing LIM professionals	Professionals working in libraries and information centres within the cities of Manzini and Mbabane	All workers found on duty during the week of data collection in November 2009 n = 35
Job advertisements for LIM professionals	Two daily newspapers, namely the Times of Swaziland and the Swazi Observer	Daily newspapers (Monday to Friday) from 2005 to 2008 n = 2084
Existing and potential employers of LIM professionals	Heads – major LIM service centres and heads – government ministries involved. <i>Existing employers could also be potential employers in this population because recruitment is not a once off function in Library and Information Management organizations</i>	Head – University of Swaziland Libraries, head – National Library Services, and heads - training & human resource planning in Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Service n = 4
Training institutions likely to host LIM education and training	Two higher education and training institutions within the cities of Manzini and Mbabane	University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni campus in the Manzini proximity; and the Mananga Centre for Regional Integration and Management Development, Ezulwini campus in the Mbabane proximity

We were unable to obtain an interview with the chairperson of the professional association because there was nobody occupying the post at the time of study. However, the employers

and employees in these population groups had served in the professional association at different times, even in leadership positions, so their input was equally valuable. We were also unable to obtain exact figures of the expenditure on foreign higher education in Library and Information Management by the government. Such information is not usually made public except for parliamentary debates, commissions of enquiry, public accounts committees or portfolio committees – none of which we belonged to during the course of the study. Furthermore, the relevance of higher education is not easily measurable because it can be highly subjective and influenced by personal tastes, preferences and expectations. Equally challenging is the assumption that local is relevant and foreign is not, which is often the generally held view when assessing relevance.

4. Results and Discussions

In this section we address the following:

- State of LIM higher education and training
- Need for LIM higher education and training in the country
- Education and training needs and levels
- Demand for LIM higher education and training products
- Infrastructure and resource needs for LIM higher education in Swaziland
- Opportunities and challenges of providing LIM higher education in the country
- Role of major stakeholders in LIM higher education
- Relevance of LIM higher education in the country
- Cost of funding LIM higher education

4.1 State of LIM higher education and training in Swaziland

The employers and employees were in agreement that local higher education in LIM was non-existent, and therefore confirmed that Swaziland has been dependent on foreign schools and qualifications in LIM.

Findings of the study indicated that training exists and were confirmed by all stakeholders – employees, employers and government. The findings concurred with the literature review (Ndlangamandla, 2011), in that employers, training institutions, individuals and the professional association provide training in Library and Information Management in Swaziland. The findings also concurred with other studies by Thapisa (1994), Ocholla (2000) and Johnson (2007) that the government and the professional association should develop training in Library and Information Management.

Even though most respondents stated that local higher education in LIM did not exist, some employees (6%) were not able to separate higher education from training in LIM, therefore responding in favour of the existence of local higher education. This response confirms the unclear distinction between the two concepts – education and training – which is highlighted in studies by Milano & Ullius (1998:4), Moore (1998:135), Blumenfeld (2000:1), and Grogan (2007:6). However, in Blumenfeld's observation and clarification, "education should come first and training later". We take exception to Blumenfeld's view in that in the profession of LIM, pre-education service (some form of training), induction, orientation, and skills-transfer may be acquired before formal higher education by employees in order to improve competence at work.

While employers and a majority of employees (94%) insisted that LIM education was non-existent in Swaziland at the time of study, they were not aware that the Institute of

Development Management (IDM) had advertised higher education certificates and diplomas in LIM in their training calendar. Employers – especially those in major LIM centres - were not aware of this development and decried this (lack of knowledge) to the absence of collaboration and consultation between higher education and training institutions and employers on issues of higher education and training. This lack of consultation and collaboration confirmed the lack of involvement of other stakeholders in higher education, as documented in studies by Shiholo and Ocholla and Younis (cited in Johnson 2007). Employers stated that it was an anomaly for training institutions not to involve them in any attempts (if indeed there were any) to establish local higher education in LIM as they are an important stakeholder. It is worth noting that LIM higher education remained non-existent during the year of advertisement and further in 2010.

4.2 Need for LIM education in the country

The findings of the study suggest that LIM employees in Swaziland need local higher education in this profession. Prospective entrants who expressed a desire to willingly join the profession would also need to be educated to the highest possible levels in this profession. Employers, both in government ministries and service centres, expressed the need for local education and felt that local education in this profession would minimize expenditure on foreign education, widen access, and promote stakeholder participation.

4.2.1 Employees

Existing employees who expressed the need for local higher education in LIM were working in different types of library and information service centres (see Figure 1).

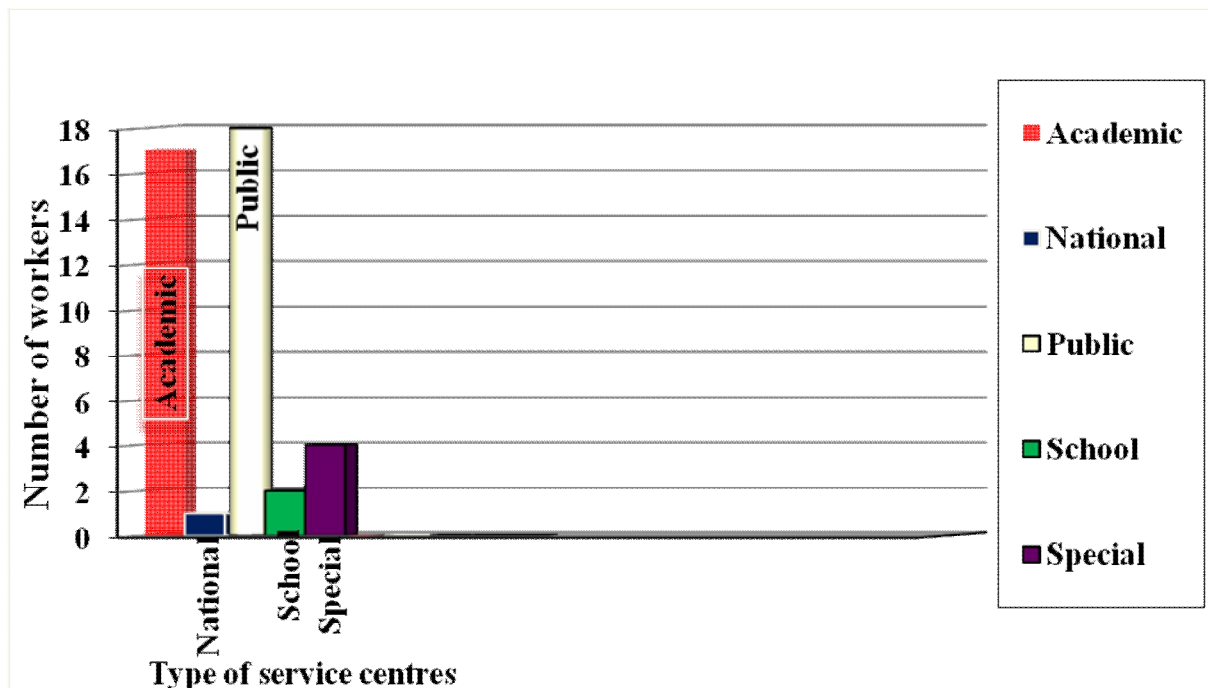


Figure 1: Employees who needed higher education according to type of service centre

The employees' experience or years of service in their organizations or institutions are indicated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Employees’ service experience in years at their organizations

The employees’ various designations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Employees’ designations

Designation	Number of employees
Assistant Librarian	8
Library Assistant	7
Librarian	5
Senior Library Assistant	4
Junior Library Assistant	3
Senior Assistant Librarian	2
Information Manager	1
Deputy Director	1
Director	1
Information Management Consultant	1
Principal Library Assistant	1
Trainee Assistant Librarian	1

4.2.2 Prospective entrants

The views of 242 completing high school students in four regions of the country were sought concerning the LIM profession and whether they would like to pursue higher education in the

profession in the near future. 94 % of these respondents were familiar with libraries and information centres and appreciated the role they play in contributing to an informed citizenry. 85 % of them realized the importance of education and training for personnel who work in library and information centres in order to improve service delivery. 64 % of the prospective entrants expressed their willingness to join the profession of LIM and pursue higher education. 50 % believed that their choice of career would be influenced by their passion for the profession. It was observed that the number of prospective entrants willing to pursue LIM education could increase to 81 % with effective marketing campaigns that would sway the 17 % undecided or flexible prospective entrants.

4.2.3 Employers

Employers also reiterated the views of the employees, but placed more emphasis on continuous education and training to improve service provision. For this information, four current and prospective employers were interviewed and asked for their views on local higher education in LIM. They all expressed the urgent need for local LIM. Employers from the government ministries expressed concern about the issue of imported higher education in the LIM profession and why this practice has been going on for so long when the government has invested so much in capacitating professionals in LIM throughout the country. These employers stressed that LIM is among the very few professions in Swaziland where there is still a lot of dependence on foreign education and qualifications. They emphasized the government's willingness to assist the profession of LIM and its professional body or bodies with relevant resources in the pursuit of establishing a local LIM School.

Employers who were the heads of the cadre also echoed the government employers' concerns and stated that the absence of local higher education in LIM affected the performance of their organizations because only a few employees got the opportunity to obtain higher education in the profession at a given time. This therefore meant that at times, the employers had to make do with under-qualified employees, while at other times certain positions or promotions had to be given to under-qualified staff so that the posts allocated to the organizations could be retained.

These employers were positive that if LIM education were to be provided locally, the number of adequately qualified employees would rise and in turn significantly improve the productivity levels of LIM organizations.

4.3 Levels required in LIM education

LIM education levels are based on qualifications obtained from higher education institutions, specifically universities and colleges. These qualifications are offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For undergraduates, qualifications include certificates, advanced certificates, diplomas, higher diplomas, associate bachelors and bachelors. Postgraduate qualifications include honours, postgraduate diplomas, masters and doctorates. For Swaziland, employees who desired higher education in LIM were mainly interested in degrees and master's and doctoral qualifications (see Figure 3). Employers, however, advised that the pursuit or provision of higher education in LIM locally (when it is finally available) should ideally start at diploma level and progress over time to higher qualifications.

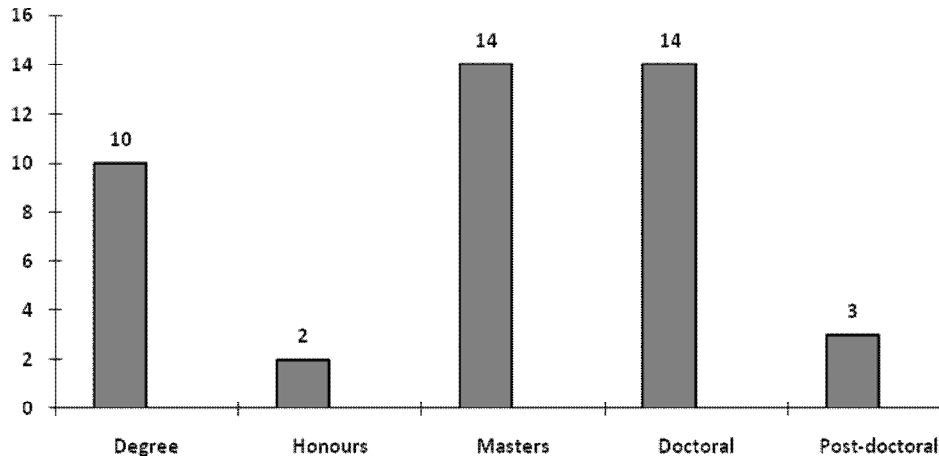


Figure 3: Desired higher education levels

Training in LIM was also required at no specific level. Training was mostly required with respect to the following:

- Information technology skills
- Project management
- Cataloguing and classification
- Children information services
- Organizational management
- Electronic information management

Employees identified the specific training areas in LIM that they required, confirming that training is need-based and part of professional development (see also Gosh 2001 and Karisiddappa 2004). Employers supported local training in LIM, further confirming the need for continuous education and development in the workplace.

4.4 Demand for LIM education

One of the objectives of the study was to assess the demand in Swaziland for locally educated and trained LIM graduates. Results were obtained from the content analysis of job advertisements in two daily newspapers over a period of four years. In order to balance these findings, employers' perspectives regarding the market were also sought. The feasibility of the LIM job market as obtained from the content analysis of advertisements was low, but employers insisted that the market exists and that there are opportunities for new markets, especially through school media centres, community information centres and record centres.

4.4.1 Newspaper advertisements

Two local daily newspapers – The Times of Swaziland (Monday – Friday) and Swazi Observer (Monday – Friday) – were scanned for a period spanning four years (January 2005 to December 2008) to determine the local market for LIM employees. 1042 Times of Swaziland and 1042 Swazi Observer newspapers were scanned, resulting in 2084 papers altogether. The newspaper scanning produced 98 job advertisements (9%) from both papers for LIM personnel. 58 advertisements were from the Times of Swaziland, while 40 were from the Swazi Observer. Most of these advertisements (46) appeared in the year 2005, 17 appeared in 2006, 19 in 2007, and 17 in 2008. 20 organizations advertised jobs during the four year period. Most of the jobs (above 5) were advertised by the following employers:

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- University of Swaziland – 27 advertisements
 - World Health Organization – 14 advertisements
 - Population Services International (PSI – Swaziland) – 9 advertisements
 - Swazi Government through the Civil Service Board – 5 advertisements

Advertised posts ran under various designations in LIM as follows:

- Documentalist / Documentation Officer
- Conservator
- Records Management Officer
- Archives Assistant
- Information Officer
- Resource Centre Officer
- Information Programme Officer
- Information Assistant
- Librarian
- Research & Communications Officer
- Data & Information Clerk
- National Information Officer
- Publications and Networking Officer
- Public Information Officer
- Assistant Librarian
- Records and Registry Officer
- Communications Officer
- Trainee Assistant Librarian
- Senior Library Assistant

Most job advertisements required a bachelor's degree qualification in LIM or related qualification. This requirement is common across Africa, as confirmed in related studies by Ocholla (2001, 2005), Lutwana and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004), and Shongwe and Ocholla (2011).

If the LIM market in Swaziland was judged based solely on the results of the newspaper advertisements, which were sparse in the four year period, it could be concluded that the market is poor and there is therefore no justification for the development of local LIM higher education. However, although newspaper scanning provides a fairly accurate reflection of the job market and is popular in the SADC region, especially if job advertising in newspapers or mass media is predominant and perhaps the best option for staff recruitment in a country, it is not flawless (Ocholla 2001, 2005; Shongwe and Ocholla 2011). Broadly speaking, organizations that are outside major LIM centres in Swaziland that may require information management skills include banks, insurance companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and telecommunications corporations; but their information and knowledge management requirements are not always known even to themselves. Some of these companies may not advertise or even realize that they can benefit from such skills until candidates 'sell' themselves to them, for example by 'cold canvassing', which enables prospective employers to identify possible employees. The market for LIM employees may also not be as low as the newspapers reflect because not all positions are advertised in newspapers. Some positions are advertised through employment agencies, by networking or

word of mouth (WoM), internally in organizations and the government, and on websites. The market for records managers and knowledge managers is also not fully discovered in Swaziland and may therefore still absorb more candidates than we anticipate.

4.4.2 Employers in Library and Information Management

Employers (see Table 1) in this category collectively agreed that there is a market for LIM educated and trained professionals in Swaziland. They attributed the market to the continuing demand for information as a resource for organizational and personal development and decision-making. The employers also stated that the LIM area would experience an increase or influx of entrants in the profession due to the new approach to high school education in Swaziland, which places more emphasis on independent learning and research for pupils and requires more use of school libraries and resource and media centres. This, according to the employers, would increase job opportunities for school librarians and thus boost the demand for LIM professionals. The employers were also of the view that the demand for well educated LIM employees in the past had been created by vacant posts left by employees who left for 'greener pastures' or better jobs, joined the private sector, or diversified / moved away from the profession. Such vacancies, the employers observed, were not easy to fill because foreign education only supplied a few candidates at a time.

The factors mentioned by employers in support of the market provided a much clearer picture of the demand for LIM employees and is in agreement with the observation made by Ndlangamandla (2011) that a market does not necessarily have to pre-exist all the time in order to exist. The results of the newspaper scanning alone would have missed this important aspect of the market and rendered the market very poor and less promising for LIM professionals.

4.5 Infrastructure and resource needs for LIM education in Swaziland

LIM education in Africa, as observed by Ocholla & Bothma (2007), is offered through established higher education institutions, specifically within universities. This study therefore observed two higher education institutions in Swaziland for infrastructure and resources suitable for hosting local LIM education, namely the University of Swaziland and the Mananga Centre for Regional Integration and Management Development. It was observed that LIM education can make use of the same or similar infrastructure, facilities and resources as other academic programs within the institutions, but would need to invest in adequately qualified human resources and the right practice environments. Both institutions were well equipped and provide different academic programs that can benefit LIM education. It was also found that the human resource potential for providing local higher education in LIM exists within the institutions. Employers supported the notion that highly educated professionals (e.g. with postgraduate Masters and PhD) in LIM could be involved in higher education and training as some of them had the relevant experience. 50 % of the employees were also convinced that human resources exist and can facilitate higher education in LIM. We agree with the employers that not every highly qualified professional in LIM is mentally ready for teaching, noting that providing higher education and training comes with a lot of hard work, commitment, and without much difference in remuneration compared to other service areas of the profession. Therefore, those involved would have to be willing to go the extra mile without much financial gain.

A further observation is that the respondents seemed to view the human resource issue for higher education in LIM only from the angle of the profession. There are other academic courses which can be offered from other disciplines such as the Humanities, Social Sciences

and Information Technology, to name a few, where human resource potential is already in abundance in the country's higher education institutions. This therefore means that higher education in LIM should not solely depend on the LIM teaching potential.

4.6 Opportunities and challenges of providing LIM education in the country

The findings of the study concur with studies by Lor, Britz & Bothma (2007), Ocholla (2008), Ocholla & Bothma (2007) and Ndlangamandla (2011) that there are a lot of challenges and opportunities in providing local higher education in the home country. The opportunities noted in this study include wider access to higher education in terms of cost and affordability; more entrants attracted to a locally provided profession; development and upgrade of infrastructure, facilities and human resources for higher education; and meaningful collaboration and partnerships with other stakeholders in higher education and training. While some opportunities are general and could apply to any host or provider of higher education in LIM, other opportunities specifically apply to Swaziland. The specific opportunities established by the study include higher recognition of the profession locally, opportunities to respond to the current approach in the education system, and also decentralization initiatives. It was noted that the specific opportunities carried more weight and were continuously echoed throughout the findings.

Challenges in providing local education and training in LIM were noted in studies by Minishi-Majanja & Ocholla (2004), Poon (2006), Ocholla (2008), Ocholla & Bothma (2007), Singh (2009) and Ndlangamandla (2011) in relation to over-expanding the curriculum due to market needs; the ever-changing and increasing number of technology applications; high enrolment interests; inactive professional association bodies that could positively influence education; and generally limited funding for higher education, among other priority areas. The study found that local higher education in LIM may experience similar challenges and more. One of the challenges echoed throughout the study was the lack of a specific LIM higher education policy, inducing fear that higher education in this profession may be provided anyhow, without quality controls, monitoring and standardization. This may not be much of a problem (Ocholla 2008) if LIM education were offered within established higher education institutions such as universities. Another challenge that was consistently voiced pertained to the sustainability of LIM students. Sustainability of LIM students has been a major problem in a number of countries and resulted in a decline in student numbers (Majanja 2004; Ocholla and Bothma 2007). We believe that the decline of students could impact more negatively on a smaller country like Swaziland. However, the study established that even with these challenges, it is feasible to provide higher education in LIM if the challenges are addressed by relevant LIM education stakeholders in the country.

4.7 Role of the major stakeholders in LIM education

The role of stakeholders was discussed in a recent study by Ndlangamandla (2011). Ocholla (2000:35) observed that in most developing countries, LIM schools were "established with government support within universities, colleges, national library services and through professional associations on the continent", who we believe to be major stakeholders. The study established that the two major stakeholders in this case are the government and the professional association, Swaziland Library Association (SWALA). It also established that employers are important stakeholders, but they are either part of the professional association or the government, and therefore need not be singled out here. The roles of these stakeholders were identified in the study but were not necessarily performed to the satisfaction of all concerned. The government proved to be supportive in its role as a sponsor of higher education and training in LIM, even though not everyone has benefited from government funding. The role of the government as a major employer was also recognized and

appreciated in the responses of the employees and the number of advertisements (see 4.4.1), with recommendations from employees for more investment in human resource development, infrastructure improvement, and better recognition and remuneration.

The professional association was highlighted by the study as playing a satisfactory role amid its challenges of weak membership, poor leadership and weak partnership links, inactivity, lack of expertise, and fragility, among other problems that often afflict such associations in developing countries (Ocholla 2000; Shiholo and Ocholla 2003; Diso & Njoku 2007; Johnson 2007; Raju 2005)

4. 8 Relevance of LIM education in the country

The issue of relevance of higher education to the local environment has been highlighted by Shiholo & Ocholla (2003), Albright & Kawooya (2007), Britz, Lor & Bothma (2007), Johnson (2007), and Ndlangamandla (2011). Such relevance, it seems, makes higher education obtained from the local environment more favourable and feasible. The employees and employers were asked about the relevance of the higher education the employees had obtained in LIM, and also the relevance of local higher education if it were provided. Both employees and employers agreed that to a large extent, LIM education obtained by the employees in foreign countries had been relevant to the work that they were doing. However, they complained that graduates lacked diversity; graduates tended to specialise in narrow areas and lacked variety in their skills. They also stated that in the present era of information and communication technology (ICT) proliferation on the job market, higher education in LIM needs a stronger ICT education component.

However, employers noted that the issue of relevance itself is complex in higher education because in its pursuit, the core focus of the profession of LIM may be compromised to the point where employees may have a qualification bearing a designation they know very little about. They emphasized that higher education has to strike a good balance between theory and practice and academia and professionalism, and maintain contact with the market in order to be relevant. However, this is not easy with foreign education as the local market has no influence on the curricula of foreign higher education institutions, making it difficult to strike the right balance and respond to local needs.

Employees (86%) and employers highlighted the following in support of the relevance of local education in LIM:

- Swazis are in a better position to know what their country needs
- Local education would equip library and information personnel with the tools to face local challenges
- It would address the pending and important issue of indigenous knowledge management in the country
- It would contribute to local research generation in the field
- It would contribute towards developing better strategies for disseminating information and attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- It would be influenced by the local market
- It would cut down the costs of importing education and support the belt-tightening initiative of the country
- It would attract and encourage more young people to enter the profession and thereby introduce fresh perspectives and newer ideas to make the profession more interesting and appealing

Some employees (14%) felt that even though local education would be relevant, the quality would be compromised as this is a developing country and unlike other countries, there would be very little to expose the students to.

Overall, a large number of employees and all the employers strongly felt that local higher education in LIM would be feasible in terms of relevance, not only for its beneficiaries, but for local LIM service centres, the professional association, the government, and the country at large.

4. 9 Cost of funding LIM education

The cost of education in local higher education institutions was found to be lower than that of foreign institutions. On average, it costs the government E20 000 to E30 000 tuition fees for candidates in local higher education institutions. Lilangeni, denoted by the E, is equivalent to the South African Rand (7. 8 to the US dollar, at the time of writing). All the employers agreed that in terms of cost, local higher education in this profession would be more feasible than foreign education. Employees shared these sentiments and emphasized that local education would relieve them from:

- Travelling expenses from the home country to the foreign school and vice versa
- Medical insurance often required by a foreign country for foreign students
- Costly study permits, applications, renewals, hassles and other related fees

Employers from the two ministries responsible for education and training emphasized that the government is willing to delegate funding for the pursuit of higher education in this profession within the country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study established that there is a need for local LIM higher education and training in Swaziland. The relevance of LIM higher education is echoed in other studies, particularly by Albright & Kawooya (2007), Britz, Lor & Bothma (2007), Johnson (2007) and Ocholla and Bothma (2007). The general feeling in these studies is that imported education may not be fully relevant to the local environment where it would be applied because it is often based on different models and environments. This study dealt with the relevance issue in two ways. It first sought to find out if existing employers and employees, especially those who had already acquired some higher education qualification/s in LIM, were happy with the relevance of the education with respect to their work. Both parties (employers and employees) indicated that the education received was partly relevant; however, they indicated that more was necessary to make it fully relevant. Employers indicated that the job market needed a diversity of skills, and seemingly the higher education approach thus far has channelled its candidates to obtain similar skills, knowledge and expertise. Overall, the study observed that the issue of relevance also has more to do with changing times and the demands of the market or clients of LIM than with the environment alone. The findings also revealed that while employees were conversant with and more specific about the higher education qualifications and levels that they desired in LIM, prospective entrants or students mostly opted for higher education at the highest possible level in the profession. The study also observed that the infrastructure and facilities required for higher education and training in LIM are generally not different from those of other higher education programs, therefore making LIM education within the existing institutions feasible, practical and cost effective. Equally, human resources for providing local higher education and training in LIM can be taken from the already available pool of qualified personnel in the profession and other related professions.

Although there could be many stakeholders in LIM education and training, the study concerned itself with two major stakeholders and the role they play in the education and training matters of this profession. The two stakeholders identified were the government and the professional association, SWALA. It was observed that the government as a stakeholder plays dual roles as a financial provider for higher education and training, and as a major employer of LIM graduates. Evidently, the role played by the government is important and well recognized and appreciable in the profession of LIM. The two major stakeholders are necessary and should not duplicate each other's efforts, but rather recognize and support each other for the growth and development of the profession.

However, the results also revealed that while funding for higher education is largely borne by the Swaziland government, the government has prioritized how she should fund higher education obtained from other countries. This prioritization was not in favour of LIM education which, as discussed, is being obtained in foreign countries.

The findings of the study highlighted both opportunities and challenges of providing higher education locally in LIM. More opportunities are evident than challenges. While some opportunities and challenges are similar to those already highlighted in other studies and seemingly experienced by other hosting institutions, there are specific opportunities and challenges that are unique to Swaziland. The notion generally held by some people that the challenges spell doom and are insurmountable obstacles to success is highly discouraged by the findings.

We recommend that in hosting LIM higher education programs, the duplication of hosting institutions should be avoided for a small country like Swaziland, and stakeholder participation and involvement should be maintained for the continued success of the education programs. Relevance should also be fairly addressed and balanced for the local, regional and international applicability of locally acquired qualifications. Tracer studies on the usefulness of the educational programs against changing needs of the market would be necessary, and within the first five years, studies should be conducted in order to positively influence the programs.

In our view, this study is expected to contribute to establishing a way forward for LIM higher education and training in Swaziland and helping professionals who wish to be involved in the higher education and training of LIM personnel by highlighting the feasibility of such, the training needs of potential candidates, and the present and potential markets for trained LIM professionals. It should also act as a guide to the state of LIM higher education and training in the country and offer ideas as to what could be done to change or improve the situation wherever the need arises. It is hoped that the government and other employers will also benefit from the outcomes of the study in terms of addressing and meeting their personnel challenges without major financial implications. Lastly, the study will add to current studies on the evolution of the LIM profession in developing countries, as these studies do not mention anything specific about Swaziland. We believe that this study will stimulate more studies and debate in LIM higher education and training.

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