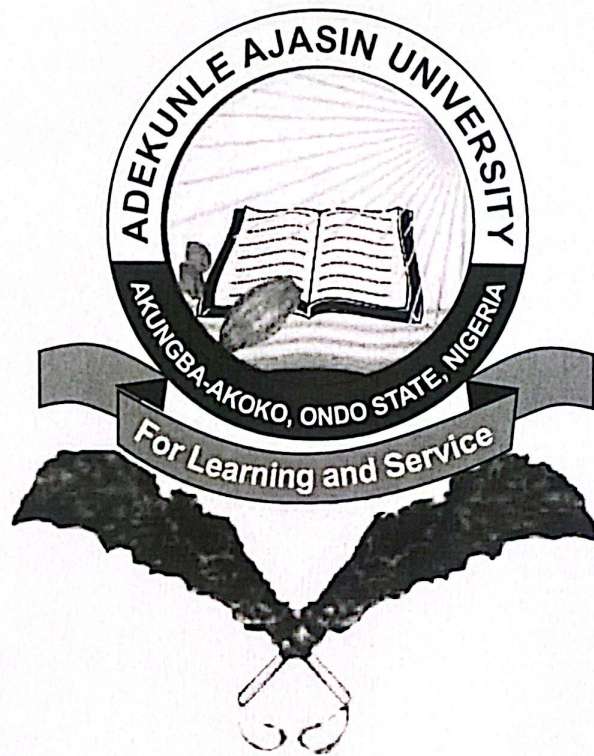


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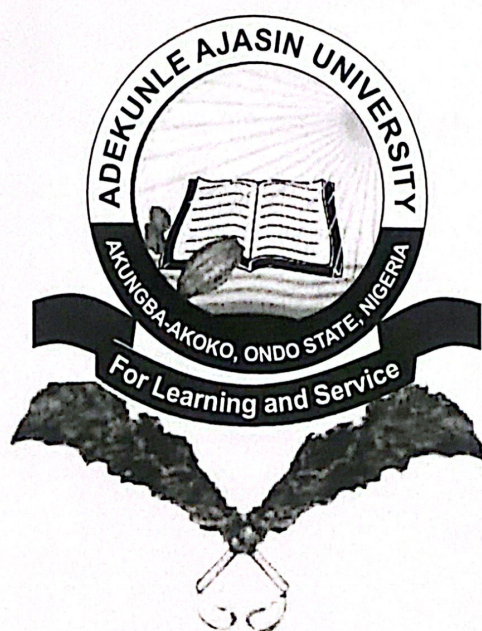
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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This journal is intended to provide a forum for the dissemination of information on the volume of work done in the fields of education around the world. It serves as an outlet for educational issues in the forms of papers, research reports on empirical studies and critical essays. It aims at generating fresh scholarly inquiries and expositions in the fields of education in so far as they relate to human conditions and interaction for the development of humanity. Therefore, the publication of work which reflects new theoretical approaches, original thoughts and those which report empirical findings at all levels of educational systems across the globe are given pride of place in the journal. It is a peer-reviewed journal which adopts rigorous processes to ensure excellent quality and international standard. It is published twice a year, February and December.

Another appealing feature of our journal is the geographical spread of our contributors. Despite the difficulties associated with this period, this issue has contributors from different academic institutions across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. It is also my pleasure to appreciate the commitments and sacrifices of the Editorial Board, the Consulting Editors, Reviewers, Authors and other stakeholders who have helped to sustain our age-long feat of quality and timely publications.

This issue has both print and online versions. The online can be assessed at <https://journals.aaua.edu.ng>.

While we congratulate those whose articles scaled through the very rigorous scrutiny of our review process, we encourage those who could not make it to do the needful corrections and upgrading to meet up with the standard of the journal.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I present to you our esteemed readers, the Vol. 12, No. 1 of Educational Thought.

Professor M. A. Hassan
Editor-in-Chief
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The Editorial Board hereby solicits for articles and research papers to be considered for publication in the Volume 13, Number 1 of the journal which shall be published in Dec., 2024 with ISSN: 1596-969X.

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AN INVESTIGATION ON THE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROSPECTIVE GRADUATES OF PRIMARY EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, KWARA STATE

By

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Abstract

The study investigated the career opportunities for prospective graduates of primary education, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design where two research questions were raised. The population of the study consisted of 200 undergraduate students from primary education as the respondents which were randomly selected across all levels. A researcher self-constructed questionnaire titled Career Opportunities for Undergraduate Students of Primary Education (COUSPE) was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was conducted by two experts in Childhood Education and Psychology, University of Ilorin respectively, while Cronbach Alpha reliability method used yielded an index of 0.70. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions raised. The findings revealed the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education as; special education teacher, preschool and childcare centre directors, childhood curriculum developer, resource person, educational consultant, and childcare specialist. It was also revealed that, the major determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies are; degree in primary education studies, higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships, personal motivation and dedication, hands-on teaching experiences during studies, and building professional networks and connections with educators. It was recommended that undergraduate students of primary education as at point of admission should be enlightened on the jobs opportunities awaiting them, so as to improve their level of seriousness towards the course. Also, students should be sensitized on the major determinants of their career opportunities, so as to know their bearing and the best way to prepare for the future.

Key words: Career opportunities, prospective graduates, primary education

Introduction

The pursuit of higher education represents a pivotal stage in an individual's life, marked by the critical choice of an academic discipline that shapes their future career prospects. This background study focuses on the career opportunities available to prospective undergraduate students specializing in Primary Education at the University of Ilorin, located in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Education is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone of societal progress, with primary education serving as the foundational level where fundamental skills are imparted to young learners (FGN 2014). In Nigeria, the University of Ilorin stands as a prominent institution entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing future educators and leaders within the field of Primary Education. The University's academic program encompasses a



curriculum that reflects contemporary educational practices, pedagogical methodologies, and practical experiences, all of which significantly influence the career readiness of its graduates.

Over the past years, Nigeria's education sector has witnessed substantial changes, characterized by a growing emphasis on the enhancement of primary education quality (Nwadiani, 2019). The Nigerian government, in collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental agencies, has implemented policies and initiatives aimed at improving primary education delivery throughout the country (World Bank, 2018). This shifting educational landscape presents unique opportunities and challenges for prospective undergraduate students of Primary Education at the University of Ilorin.

Every individual must, at one time or another, be confronted with the problem of occupational choice and many, encounter this problem when as students they are required to choose study programmes leading to their future careers, as parents helping their children select careers, as teachers, career officers or psychologists, who as part of their daily work, offer career guidance to students (Ferreira, Santos, Fonseca, & Haase, 2006). Perhaps, the significance of career choice can be underscored by the influence careers have on an individual's income, standard of living, status in society, social contacts, as well as emotional health and feelings of self-worth. Therefore, making suitable career decisions implies less wastage of resources in education and training.

Furthermore, careers once chosen will probably affect an individual throughout their lives. It is in this connection therefore that Sharf (2010) contends that clarity and meaning of life are expressed in one's career. Consequently, it is by being armed with better information and proper guidance that individuals are able to make appropriate career decisions. Due to need for specialization at the work place, choosing a career is not an easy and straight forward undertaking. It is a complicated and daunting task because the decision is influenced by various factors – extrinsic, intrinsic or a combination of both (Hewitt, 2010).

Studies have shown that the main intrinsic factors responsible for influencing career choice decisions include an individual's personality, interests, self-concept, attitudes and cultural identity. On the other hand, the main extrinsic factors include social contacts, role models; availability of resources such as information and finances, globalization, ethnic background, level of educational attainment, choice of subjects of study and differences in job characteristics (McQuaid & Bond, 2013). Hewitt (2010) notes that most people are heavily influenced either by professions that their parents favour; or the ones that their educational achievements have opened for them. Yet, other individuals are influenced by careers that offer prospects of higher benefits including salary, allowances and holidays. However; there are also those who choose to follow careers that they have a passion for regardless of the prospects of the benefits; for the reason that a career is a critical element in determining an individual's daily routine, life activities, standard of living; and the spiritual and social aspects of life.

In fact, a career affects the ordering of one's entire life. Although there are differences among various population groups, generally extrinsic influences on career choice decisions are mostly influenced by parents, peers, friends, relatives, role models, and teachers especially career counsellors. This is possible through social support or interaction (Pummel, Harwood & Lavalley, 2008). However, the extent to which each of them influences career choice decisions varies from one population to the other. Before making career choices, students are often provided with a list of careers from which they are supposed to make choices.

However, most students lack adequate information regarding various careers hence the choices they make are embedded in their perception of the ideal job and the subjects they study in secondary school. Perhaps the only support students get within the school system is from career masters or counsellors who are expected to support students in their career choice. When the final examination results are released, and depending on the grades obtained, students are allowed to revise their choices. Then, the Joint Universities' Admission Board selects students for admission to various courses on the basis of these choices.

Some scholars believed that career opportunities have a strong correlation with individual factors. For example, Zhu (2014) investigated 327 high-tech enterprises in Zhejiang Province as a sample and used the t-test to conclude that University students' career opportunities are closely related to individual learning ability and innovation ability. Peng (2014) investigated the graduates of five Universities and Universities in Nanchang, empirically analyzed the influencing factors of University students' career opportunities by using econometric modeling, and found that social practice activities and work practice had a significant positive influence on University students' career opportunities.

Lu et al. (2017) investigated University students in Six Universities in Tianjin and used the structural



equation modeling method to reveal the factors influencing University students' career opportunities, and confirmed that personal traits, professional quality, and social adaptability had a strong positive relationship with University students' career opportunities, while basic skills had a positive relationship with University students' professional quality. Other scholars argued that career opportunities are closely related to the factors of Universities.

For example, Peng (2014) combed through the relevant literature and pointed out that the key point to enhance the career opportunities of University students is the higher education model. Based on the Career EDGE model, Hewit (2010) surveyed 236 fresh University graduates in economics and management, 101 staff members of employers, and 89 University faculty members, and found that there are five core factors influencing graduates' career opportunities, such as "strong ability to adapt to the environment" and two short-term factors influencing job search, such as "self-presentation ability." The survey shows that there are differences in the perceptions of students' career opportunities among University teachers, students, and employers. Sharf (2010) empirically analyzed the influence of the cultivation mechanism of Universities and Universities on the career opportunities of University students by establishing a mathematical model. In summary, scholars have studied the concept of career opportunities of University students and the influencing mechanism from different perspectives and achieved certain research outcomes. However, by combing through the literature, we find some limitations.

First, career opportunities dimensions generally lack a theoretical foundation, and the logical relationship between career opportunities dimensions and definitions of career opportunities is not strong. Second, the conceptualization of University students' career opportunities is inconsistent, and studies on information acquisition and career planning skills in the career opportunities dimension are rarely seen. Third, the antecedent variables of University students' career opportunities are inconsistent, and few studies consider the factors of club activities and employment guidance. Fourth, although some scholars pointed out that higher education influences University students' career opportunities, most of them focused on theoretical elaboration, few of them used empirical analysis to verify whether there is a positive correlation between higher education and University students' career opportunities and what University factors have a more significant effect on improving University students' career opportunities.

In light of the dynamic nature of the education sector and the evolving demands placed on primary educators, it becomes imperative to assess the career prospects and opportunities accessible to students pursuing a degree in Primary Education at the University of Ilorin. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the alignment between the University's educational curriculum, the evolving needs of primary education in Nigeria, and the diverse career pathways available to its graduates. Ultimately, this research endeavor seeks to contribute to informed decision-making processes for prospective students and relevant stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector.

The career prospects and opportunities for prospective undergraduate students specializing in Primary Education at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, have been subject to limited empirical investigation, despite the critical role of primary education in the overall development of a nation. While primary education is the foundational level of learning and holds immense significance in Nigeria's educational landscape, the career paths and readiness of graduates in this field remain relatively underexplored. As the education sector in Nigeria undergoes continuous reforms and transformations, the primary education sector in Nigeria is evolving, with increasing demands for quality education and innovative teaching methods. Prospective students need to be aware of how the Primary Education program at the University of Ilorin aligns with the changing needs of primary education in the country (Egunjobi, 2016). It is essential to assess whether graduates of Primary Education at the University of Ilorin are adequately prepared for the demands of the modern primary education environment, including their knowledge, skills, and pedagogical expertise (Egbe & Bassey, 2018).

The employability prospects of graduates in Primary Education need to be investigated, including the diversity of career pathways available to them, such as teaching in primary schools, educational consultancy, curriculum development, and education administration (Agbatogun, 2019). A critical examination of the curriculum offered at the University of Ilorin is required to determine if it equips students with the necessary competencies to excel in contemporary primary education contexts (Onyeke, & Ugwoke, 2016). It is essential to explore whether there are gender-based disparities in career opportunities for graduates in Primary Education, as gender inequality remains a significant concern in the Nigerian educational sector (Uwadiae, 2020). This study seeks to address these pressing issues by conducting a



comprehensive examination of the career opportunities and prospects available to prospective undergraduate students of Primary Education at the University of Ilorin. The findings will not only benefit prospective students in making informed decisions but also contribute to enhancing the quality and relevance of primary education programs in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main focus of this study is to assess the career opportunities for prospective graduates of primary education, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to;

1. Examine the available career opportunities for prospective undergraduate students of primary education; and
2. Investigate the determinants of career opportunities for the undergraduates.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the available career opportunities for prospective graduates of Primary Education Studies?
2. What are the determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of Primary Education Studies?

Methodology

The focus of this study is mainly on the assessment of the career opportunities for prospective graduates of primary education, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. It employed a descriptive survey where the opinions of the participants were sought for the research. This research design was selected because this study sampled the opinions of the undergraduate students from the Department of Adult and Primary Education on the available career opportunities for the prospective graduate. The study focused on students from the Department of Adult and Primary Education as the target population. From this, 200 students were randomly sampled from the Department across all levels. This gave a total number of 200 respondents for the study. To elicit vital information from the respondents, a researcher self-constructed questionnaire titled "Career Opportunities for Undergraduate Students of Primary Education (COUSPE)" was used with clear information for the respondents.

The instrument has two sections: the first section was used to gather information on available career opportunities for prospective undergraduate students of primary education, while the second section was used to elicit information on determinants of career opportunities for the undergraduates, using two respond format of Available (2) and Unavailable (1) for research question 1, while four respond format of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2), and Strongly Disagreed (1) was used for research question 2. The questionnaire items of the demographic data in section A was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Section B was calculated using mean and standard deviation for the research questions.

In order to ensure the validity of the instruments, face and content validity was used where the items on the questionnaire were checked against the research purposes. An expert judgment was also sought from the supervisors and two other lecturers from the Department who assisted in the validation of the research instruments. To measure the reliability of the tool, the researcher assigned some copies of the instrument to some respondents. In this case, twenty-two copies of the instrument were administered on the representative and the scores were tested against the instrument to ensure its reliability using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) to answer the research questions raised.

The results of the findings are shown below:

Research Question 1: *What are the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education, University of Ilorin?*

In order to assess the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education, University of Ilorin, mean of responses of the students to each items on the questionnaire were computed, having four response format of Available (2 points), and Not Available (1 point). In other to get the cut-off mark, the average of the total point was calculated to be 1.5 (That is; $2+1 = 3$; $3/2 = 1.5$). The result are presented in the table below:



Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation showing the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	Remark
1.	Special education teacher	1.72	1.06	Available
2.	School counselor	1.48	1.11	Not Available
3.	School psychologist	1.44	1.09	Not Available
4.	Educational consultant	1.60	1.13	Available
5.	Child life specialist	1.59	1.23	Available
6.	Preschool and childcare centre directors	1.70	1.06	Available
7.	Speech therapist	1.35	1.26	Not Available
8.	Early intervention specialist	1.42	1.24	Not Available
9.	Resource person	1.62	1.12	Available
10.	Childhood curriculum developer	1.65	1.11	Available
Weighted Mean		1.56		

Table 1 above showed the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education, University of Ilorin. The evidence as seen from the table above shows the mean value of all the items which are all greater than 1.50, except items 2, 3, 7 and 8 which was less than 1.50. From the students' response, it was revealed that the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education are; special education teacher, preschool and childcare centre directors, childhood curriculum developer, resource person, educational consultant, and childcare specialist. This were all ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th respectively in accordance with their mean values from the highest to the lowest. The overall mean value of 1.56 which is greater than the cut-off means of 1.50 indicated that most of the career opportunities listed above are available for undergraduate students of primary education.

Research Question 2: What are the determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies?

In order to examine the determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies, mean of responses of the students to each items on the questionnaire were computed, having four likert scale format of Strongly Agreed (4 points), Agreed (3 points), Disagreed (2 points), and Strongly Disagreed (1 point). In other to get the cut-off mark, the average of the total point was calculated to be 2.5 (That is; $4+3+2+1 = 10$; $10/4 = 2.5$). The result is presented in the table below:



Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation showing the determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies.

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	Rank
1.	Obtaining a degree in Primary Education Studies enhances qualifications for various career opportunities.	2.59	1.03	1 st
2.	Practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships are essential for improving career prospects.	2.57	1.07	3 rd
3.	Hands-on teaching experiences during studies will make students more attractive to potential employers	2.55	1.09	5 th
4.	Building professional networks and connections with educators and peers can positively influence career opportunities.	2.54	1.10	6 th
5.	-----	2.51	1.12	8 th
6.	Personal motivation and dedication will play a significant role in determining career success	2.56	1.07	4 th
7.	Ability to create one's career opportunities through proactive efforts and continuous learning.	2.50	1.13	9 th
8.	Economic conditions and job market trends will impact the availability of career opportunities for graduates of Primary Education Studies.	2.48	1.16	10 th
9.	Higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, can significantly enhance career prospects.	2.58	1.07	2 nd
10.	Developing practical teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge during studies is crucial for future career	2.54	1.11	6 th
Weighted Mean		2.54		

Table 2 above revealed the determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies. The evidence was seen from the table above where the mean value of all the items are greater than 2.50, except item 8 that is less than 2.50. From the students' response, it was revealed that the major determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies are; degree in primary education studies, higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships, personal motivation and dedication, hands-on teaching experiences during studies, and building professional networks and connections with educators. This were all ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th respectively in accordance with their mean values from the highest to the least. The overall mean value of 2.54 which is greater than the cut-off means of 2.50 indicated that almost all the above items are the major determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies, University of Ilorin, Kwara State.

Summary of the Findings

The results from the findings above revealed that:

1. The career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education are; special education teacher, preschool and childcare centre directors, childhood curriculum developer, resource person, educational consultant, and childcare specialist.
2. The major determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies are; degree in primary education studies, higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships, personal



motivation and dedication, hands-on teaching experiences during studies, and building professional networks and connections with educators.

Discussion of the Findings

It was revealed from the findings that the career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education are; special education teacher, preschool and childcare centre directors, childhood curriculum developer, resource person, educational consultant, and childcare specialist. This was seen from the students' responses to all the items on the list where it was clearly revealed that there are numerous career opportunities for prospective students of primary education. This was as a result of their knowledge regarding the benefits of studying primary education studies which will afford them opportunities to function in various forms of organization. This was supported by the submission of Brown and Lent (2016) where it was stated that career opportunities encompass the various possibilities and pathways available to individuals as they navigate the world of work. These opportunities include a wide range of job roles, occupations, industries, and sectors that individuals can pursue to achieve their professional goals and personal fulfillment. Career opportunities are diverse, reflecting the myriad options individuals have in choosing their professions. Careers can be found in fields such as healthcare, technology, education, arts, business, and more, each offering unique prospects and challenges.

Also, it was revealed from the findings that the major determinants of career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies are; degree in primary education studies, higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships, personal motivation and dedication, hands-on teaching experiences during studies, and building professional networks and connections with educators. This was seen from the students' responses to all the items on the list where it was clearly revealed that before career paths or opportunities can be chosen, there are lots of factors that can be considered which serve as determinants for choose a career path. This corroborates the submission of Rifkin (2011) who submitted that career opportunities are influenced by the evolving nature of work. Globalization, technological advancements, and shifts in economic structures have reshaped industries, creating new roles and altering traditional career trajectories. He further noted that many career opportunities necessitate specific education and skill sets. For example, healthcare professions often require extensive medical training, while technology careers may demand expertise in programming and data analysis. This was buttressed by Hall (2022) who stated that career opportunities often involve mobility and transitions. Individuals may start in entry-level positions and progress through their chosen field, or they may change careers entirely, leveraging transferable skills and experiences.

Conclusion

From the findings, it was concluded that the most career opportunities available for undergraduate students of primary education are; special education teacher, preschool and childcare centre directors, childhood curriculum developer, resource person, educational consultant, and childcare specialist. Also, it was concluded that the major factors that serve as determinants for career opportunities for the prospective graduates of primary education studies are; degree in primary education studies, higher levels of education, such as postgraduate degrees in education, practical experiences such as teaching practicums and internships, personal motivation and dedication, hands-on teaching experiences during studies, and building professional networks and connections with educators.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are hereby proffered for the students studying primary education to be aware of the opportunities in their course of study.

1. Undergraduate students of primary education as at point of admission should be enlightened on the jobs opportunities that await them, so as to improve their level of seriousness towards the course.
2. Students should be sensitized on the major determinants of their career opportunities, so as to know their bearing and the best way to prepare for the future.



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