
Influence of User Education Programme on Distance Learning Students' Use of Library Resources

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ABSTRACT

Effective use of library resources by distance learning students is a vital tool for improvement in long –life learning skills, information searching and research. Any higher institution devoid of effective library user education programme is bound to have poor learning outcome. Hence, the study evaluated the user-education programmes of selected national Open University of Nigeria libraries. Three research questions were asked to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of 808 second year students drawn from the three Centers: Kaduna (200), Enugu (348) and Apapa (260). Data was collected through a researcher developed questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist duly validated by three lecturers from department of library and information science, university of Nigeria Nsukka and was used to collect data from students. The result was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation. The findings revealed among others that a positive influence existed in favour of user education, especially when the Duration of library orientation period is increased and made compulsory for all registered students. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that, effort should be made to improve user education programme in National Open university of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The library provides enabling environment for reading and research. It is the library's responsibility to provide better services to its clients to make sure that information sources, services and resources are well utilized for users' benefits. Hence user education program is very crucial for library user's achievements (Suleiman 2012). Gorman, (2006) states that, Libraries are concerned primarily with the messages that constitute the human record and only secondarily with the medium by means of which messages are transmitted. Library is a part of the general context of the societal institutions that promote education, research, learning, social cohesion, and the higher aspirations of humankind.

The library provides user education in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of library so as to enable them use the library resources effectively. The reason for the provision of user education in the library is that library processes could

be so complex that an average user may not easily comprehend how to utilize the available resources. As a result of the era of information explosion in which we are, information is expending at a very fast rate and new resources are being introduced into the library (Aina, 2004). With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), which has permeated all the activities of libraries, it is important to explain the working of a library to a new user in detail. The ultimate objective of any library is to enable users exploit its resources to the fullest.

Fjallbrant (1984), defines user education as: "the teaching of those skills that will enable students to locate and use materials effectively and feel confident in using the library." Also, its aim is to acquaint users with the use of materials in the libraries. Similarly, Fleming (1990) defined user education as "various programmes of instruction, education and exploration provided by academic libraries to users to enable them to make effective,

efficient and independent use of information sources and services to which these libraries provide access.” Bello (2003) defined library user education as: “A device by the librarians to educate users on how to use the resources available in the library in a result-oriented way.” Thus, its concerned with information retrieval, since the objectives of the user education in academic library according to Osagie (2003) are as follows:

To enable users to know how to use the library catalogue independently in any library with particular reference to the author, title and subject catalogues.

- i. To enable users to understand the classification schemes in any library so as to be able to locate materials with little or no problem.
- ii. To be able to see library catalogues as indexes to the entire collection and use them as such.
- iii. To enable the users to see the library as a repository of knowledge that determines the success of the students’ academic programme because it’s not possible for an individual to have the collection of a library.

Students in Nigeria tertiary institutions are introduced to the use of library in one form or the other, in order that they might know what to consult in their quest for information. Today, most students in higher institute of learning find it difficult to explore the world of information sources in the library thus leading to poor appreciation of the library and its resources, which contributes to their inability to undergo meaningful researches or at best become poor library users. It is believed that a concerted effort to know and understand library more will eventually enable the individual to develop him/herself to the fullest potentials. This becomes very important as it will enable man to contribute effectively and positively to the development of the society at large. Hence, this study intends to appraise the user education programmes in National Open University.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to appraise the influence of user education programmes in National Open University. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Determine the influence of user education programme on the use of library resources.
2. Ascertain the problem militating against the adequacy, competence and motivation of staff in the user education programme.
3. Proffer suggestions and make recommendations that could improve the programmes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the influence of user education programme on the use of library resources?
2. What are problems that militate against the adequacy, competency and motivation of staff in user education programmes?
3. What are the possible ways to improve on user education programmes?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design according to Aina (2002) is a design which describes in a systematic manner the comprehensive collection of information about the opinion, attitude, belief and behaviour of people through administration of questionnaire, interview and observation to a relatively large representative sample of the population. This design was therefore deemed appropriate for this study which sought to collect data on the opinion, attitude and behaviour of the students through the administration of questionnaire and interview, with a view to evaluate the user education programme in academic libraries. The study was carried out in three study centers in Enugu, Kaduna and Lagos States of Nigeria. The population of study consisted of 808 second year students of National

Open University from the three centres in Kaduna (200), Enugu (348) and Apapa (260).

The instruments used for this study, is a Self-Designed Questionnaire. Section A is designed to elicit responses on the effect of the programme and comprise of eight items. Section B has six items on respondent's opinion on the problems militating against adequacy and competence on staffing in the programme. Section C has 4 items. Provision was given for personal suggestions from respondents. Each of the research questions were distributed to the respondents with the help of the research assistants. All the items will be rated on 4-point rating scale.

The instrument (structured questionnaire) was face validated by three experts from the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. They were requested to perform the face validation of the instruments. They corrected the grammatical errors, sequencing and ordering of the items of the instruments and suitability

of the response tags among others. Some of the major corrections include removal of GSP 111 which has not been taught.

Three research assistants who are staff of the university library were engaged in the distribution and collection of the instrument which lasted for two weeks. For the Interview, the researcher visited the librarians after booking appointment with them to conduct the interview herself, while a trained research assistant helped in jotting down the salient points.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The results were analyzed using frequency, percentage, Mean and standard deviation. Mean and standard deviation in accordance with the research questions that guided the research exercise.

1. **Research Question 1:** What is the influence of user education programme on the use of library resources?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the effect of the programme to the use of library resources

	Questionnaire items	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	Know the layout of the library and its resources through the library orientation programme	2.14	1.08	2.23	1.07	2.07	1.13	2.16	1.09	7 th	Ineffective
2	Use the library catalogue to locate and retrieve library materials	2.09	1.06	2.19	1.01	2.30	1.22	2.20	1.09	5 th	ineffective
3	Use reference materials	2.97	.90	2.58	1.09	2.70	1.22	2.72	1.09	1 st	effective
4	Cite authors	2.23	1.05	2.23	1.09	2.08	.90	2.18	1.02	6 th	ineffective
5	Use computers in locating and retrieving information	2.15	1.11	2.24	1.22	2.50	1.31	2.30	1.22	3 rd	ineffective
6	Get first-hand information about the library by the use of library Guide or Handbook.	2.70	1.13	2.10	1.01	2.29	1.11	2.32	1.10	2 nd	ineffective

	Questionnaire items	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
7	Locate and use the resources of the library by the use of directional signs.	2.14	1.12	2.14	1.13	2.08	1.09	2.12	1.11	8 th	ineffective
8	Be kept current and also aware of rules and regulations of the library through the use of the notice board	2.32	1.09	2.22	1.03	2.10	1.09	2.21	1.07	4 th	ineffective

Table 1 above shows the mean rating of the respondents evaluating the effect of the library user education to the use of library resources on perception of the respondents on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of library user education. Using the criterion mean of 2.50, the results of the data analysis revealed that out of eight items listed, only use reference materials with mean value of 2.72 is greater than the criterion mean, thus can be regarded to be effective.

Nevertheless, the others items with their mean value less than 2.50 were ineffective. they include: Know the layout of the library and its resources through the library orientation programme (mean = 2.16); Use the library catalogue to locate and retrieve library materials (mean = 2.20); Cite authors

(mean = 2.18); Use computers in locating and retrieving information (mean = 2.30); Get first-hand information about the library by the use of library Guide or Handbook. (Mean = 2.32) Locate and use the resources of the library by the use of directional signs. (Mean = 2.12) and Be kept current and also aware of rules and regulations of the library through the use of the notice board (mean = 2.21)

The standard deviation, showing the rate of dispersion of the scores indicated that Use computers in locating and retrieving information (1.22) had the greatest spreads of scores.

Research Question 2: What are problems that militate against the adequacy, competency and motivation of staff in user education programmes?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on opinion of adequacy, competence and motivation of staff in user education programme

	Questionnaire items	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	Knowledge of subject matter	3.62	.61	3.29	.82	3.53	.61	3.45	.72	6 th	Adequate
2	At the orientation	3.57	.79	3.36	.80	3.55	.82	3.48	.81	4 th	Adequate

	Questionnaire items	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
3	at the conference	3.64	.53	3.50	.61	3.51	.54	3.54	.57	3 rd	Friendly
4	Class control (discipline)	3.64	.65	3.50	.62	3.72	.45	3.61	.59	2 nd	Effective
5	Student participation	3.77	.50	3.74	.51	3.75	.44	3.75	.48	1 st	Effective
6	adequacy of staff at the orientation	3.43	.60	3.53	.53	3.44	.52	3.48	.55	4 th	Adequate

Table 2 above shows the mean rating of the respondents evaluating the effect of the library user education to the use of library resources on perception of the respondents on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of library user education. Using the criterion mean of 2.50, the results of the data analysis revealed that out of eight items listed, only use reference materials with mean value of 2.72 is greater than the criterion mean, thus can be regarded to be effective.

Nevertheless, the others items with their mean value less than 2.50 were ineffective. they include: Know the layout of the library and its resources through the library orientation programme (mean = 2.16); Use the library catalogue to locate and retrieve library materials (mean = 2.20); Cite authors

(mean = 2.18); Use computers in locating and retrieving information (mean = 2.30); Get first-hand information about the library by the use of library Guide or Handbook. (Mean = 2.32) Locate and use the resources of the library by the use of directional signs. (Mean = 2.12) and Be kept current and also aware of rules and regulations of the library through the use of the notice board (mean = 2.21)

The standard deviation, showing the rate of dispersion of the scores indicated that the Use of computers in locating and retrieving information (1.22) had the greatest spreads of scores.

Research Question 3: What are the possible ways to improve on user education programmes?

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on the ways to improve on user education programmes

	Strategies	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	The orientation be conducted when all student must have registered and settled down.	3.47	.57	3.56	.53	3.40	.60	3.49	.57	3 rd	Important
2	The duration for the orientation be increased	3.78	.49	3.53	.50	3.66	.52	3.64	.51	1 st	Important

	Strategies	Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
3	Methods of approach be improved upon to take care of practical sessions and information technology.	3.80	.43	3.48	.50	3.64	.52	3.62	.51	2 nd	Important
4	Library to design, use and maintain attractive and relevant bibliographic aids and guides.	3.39	.49	3.46	.50	3.46	.52	3.44	.50	4 th	Important

Table 3 above shows the mean rating of the respondents on ways to improve on user education programmes. The overall mean results reveal that the duration for the orientation be increased (mean=3.64) as a major way to improve a user education. Also, using the criterion mean of it was discovered that the entire four listed factors contribute to improvement of user education.

These include, the orientation be conducted when all student must have registered and settled down. (mean = 3.49); Methods of approach be improved upon to take care of practical sessions and information technology (mean = 3.62) and Library to design, use and maintain attractive and relevant bibliographic aids and guides (mean = 3.44).

DISCUSSIONS

It is expected that when library users are educated on proper handling of library materials which form part of user education program, a lot of library materials are saved from wear and tear occasioned by poor handling. This also save fund for the library as money that would have been spent on repair or replacement of damage materials are channeled to other meaningful use. Data gathered from both questionnaire and interview used in the study revealed poor library user education in National Open University. This could be attributed to poor standard of library facilities. Ojo-Igbiniobe (1991)

reported that students developed a high interest in their academic and social life as a result of the user education programme.

Nevertheless, the study shows that the positive effect of user education in National Open University resulted to the use of reference materials, this was supported by K/Sasuri (2006) submission that properly instructed library user retrieves information faster, as he knows why, what, how and where to get any relevant information with minimum delay.

Students, even if knowledgeable and skilled in using their high school libraries, are intimidated by the massive size of the university library system, and the arrangement of its extensive print, non-print and electronic information resources. Therefore, students' frustration and anxiety need to be reduced by making the information finding and retrieval process easier.

Edem and Lawal (1996) contributing to improved user education programme in Nigerian University Libraries identify lack of personnel, lack of professional, time for teaching and practical work as major problems. Akinbola (2007) on the significance of user education recommends that: the user education programme in our tertiary institutions should be overhauled to make it more standard. Adequate qualified personnel should be recruited to undertake the teaching of the course effectively; the course should be allocated reasonable time on the

time table so as to enable practical aspect taught effectively. The interview conducted emphasized the fact that the defined priority for the library, particularly in the first part of each academic year. According to Lawal (1990) the concept of library user education has also transformed and expanded to information literacy and learning for life. It reduces the library staff's time and efforts in solving individual problems regarding the use of library services.

From the questionnaires responses, library user education can be improved if duration of orientation period is increased and conducted when majority of the students are available. Idowu (2008) argues that four main areas affecting the programme that need to be re-appraised are: timing of the programme delivery, quality of course delivery, funding of the programme, lack of continuity and follow-up. Also, through interview schedule, it was observed that library and information skills improve when the skills are course related.

Looking at result in table 2, there are needs to affect the curriculum standard of user education, if it will be effective. This emphasis was reinstated by Joseph (2005). He asserts on the need for explicit statement of objectives, availability of infrastructure, qualified trainers, careful choice of teaching methods and regular systematic evaluation. Livehabura (2009) is of the opinion that user education should be integrated within the curriculum of the institution so that the contents and coverage of the programme accommodates information development, learning, teaching and research within and outside the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to the relevant authorities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of library user education in National Open University.

- i. Government should formulate a workable policy that will see to it that students are introduced to the use of library right from the nursery and primary school levels. If students have

been introduced to library use education from the nursery school level, the knowledge of the library and its resources would have been part of them before they get to tertiary education level.

- ii. Practical aspect of the user education should be introduced to enhance what is being taught theoretically.
- iii. For the library user education to be taken seriously by the users of the library, its status must change from zero unit which it is presently in some Nigerian Universities to at least two or three units course.
- iv. Instruction on Information Technology (computer) in the library should be improved upon.

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