Imperatives of Library User Education Programme on the Use of The Library and It's Resources: The Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku Experience

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Abstract
The essence of library user education is to ensure that library users make adequate use of the resources available in the library. It is an academic programme of study designed by institutions of higher learning to educate library users on how to effectively utilize library resources and services. This study therefore examines library user education as an essential aspect of the academic programme of any academic institution of learning and as a survival skill that forms the basis for lifelong learning. This paper also discussed the significance of library user education programme to the proper utilization of the library and its resources. Recommendations were made to further improve the standard of the programme in institutions of learning.

Keywords: *library, library resources, library users, library user education, academic programme, academic institution.*

1.1 Introduction

Library user education is an essential and integral part of the academic programmes of institutions of higher learning. This programme is needed for all library users to facilitate the retrieval of information. Library user education programme is a form of education for library users. It is a planned process and technique that is targeted at equipping library user with the basic skills to enable them optimally utilizes library resources. The library user education programme is based on the premise that users may not make adequate use of the library resources if they lack the skills needed to make effective use of the library. Various terms have been used to describe ways of impacting knowledge on the use of the library.

There is need for educational innovation as a good philosophical reason for seeking innovation in education is to improve knowledge, skill and attitude of students. Such innovations in the educational sector are in the use of ICT in teaching and learning process. Osunrinade, (2007) stated that "some students still have terrible experiences in an academic library because of the large collections and the appearances of new technologies" that they could not surf through them.

1.2 Background of the Study

The Delta State Polytechnic Library was established in 2003 following the establishment of the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in 2002 with the aim of meeting

the information needs of users, (Staff and Students). The Polytechnic has six schools and twenty - five departments and has a unit of Computer Literacy Centre as well as an Electronic library as an academic system. These two Centres have ICT Packages that are relevant to the various needs of the Polytechnic Community. The E-Library provides both staff and students with access to the intranet and internet on a daily basis. The Library user education at the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku is coded GNS 103 (use of library). The school of General Studies at the Polytechnic has tailored courses to meet the standard of National Board for Technical Education for the award of National Diploma in Nigerian Polytechnics in which all students are expected to take and pass the General Studies courses. One of which is the "Use of Library" handled by only professional librarians of the Polytechnic library. It is a two unit course studied by all ND1 students of the Polytechnic.

The course content of the programme includes the following:
(1) The Concept of Libraries and Library Development
(2) Library Administration and Organization
(3) Library Stocks
(4) Acquisition and Organization of Library Materials
(5) Care and Use of Library Materials
(6) Use of ICTs in Libraries among others.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Library User Education Programme
The development of library user education programme in Nigerian institution of higher learning could be considered to be new. This is so because there is hardly any institution of higher learning in Nigeria that has a carefully designed library user education programme. This agrees with Nwalo (2000)

who stated that in Nigeria, library user education is relatively new, he said that based on some of the activities found on the subject in local literature, not much is happening in Nigerian libraries by way of carefully planned and executed library user education programme. Various terms have been used at different times and by different authors to describe the library user education. Library user education is sometimes called "the use of library instruction, library orientation or bibliographic instruction. Chopra, (2001) quoting Tocatious Jacqi-es, the former Director General, Information Programmes of UNESCO, defined user education in generic term as any effort or programme which will guide and instruct existing and potential library users, individually or collectively with the objective of facilitating the recognition of their own information needs, the formulation of these needs, effective and efficient use information services and the assessment of these services.

2.3 The Need for Library User Education Programme
The need for library education is expedient in higher institution of learning, this Anie (2015) saw when he emphasized the justifications for the use of library course to be included in institutions of higher learning to teach students how to use the library effectively and to develop in the students the interest and habits of using the library all the time even after higher education. There is also the need to expose the students to the rich and different types of information materials in the library. It is expected to teach them how to use their leisure time meaningfully to enable the students master the rules and regulations in order to exploit the resources of the library effectively. It is also expected that the students would be conversant with the library services which offer them the opportunity of getting the information required to provide adequate comfortable accommodation and physical

facilities for meaningful academic work. It should provide adequate physical facilities like reading carrels, reading chairs, etc for reading to preserve literary heritage of a society for posterity by preserving the information source in the library.

Also through various security checks for future use, ensures the conservation and transmission of the culture of the people from generation to generation by preserving human knowledge and keeping the students abreast of the activities of man. There is the need to impact in students independent study habits through contact with books. Busayo, (2003) in a study of the use of the library as a requisite course at the university of Ado-Ekiti, discovered that 95.11% of the fresh students admitted noted that they learnt new things through the use of library course.

Bello, (2003) in a similar library user education evaluation at the Ibadan Polytechnic library observed that 93% of the respondents agreed that library user course has helped in the proper use of the library. Ojo-Ade and Jagboro (2000) while researching on subject catalogue use at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife observed that users of the library were well informed and versatile in the use of library catalogue especially the subject catalogue. According to them, high success rate of user's searches could also be attributed to the respondents' knowledge of the use of the library gained from library instruction (LIB 001). Osinili, (2003) as cited by Akalumhe (2011) revealed in a study conducted on undergraduate students of Olabisi-Onabanjo university on library instruction observed that 70% of the respondents admitted that library instruction was relevant to their academic work.

The study also revealed that the university library was usually overcrowded. Ali (2007) noted that "user education is a group of instruction that is aimed at introducing students to a library's physical organization of materials. Edoka (2000) had earlier enumerated the specific aims of user education to include having the knowledge of the basic kinds of print and non print materials available and how they are arranged. It is also aimed at knowing the basic bibliographic tools and how to use them; knowledge of the specific bibliographic tools in particular area of interest and how to use them; and knowledge of other subject area related to the primary interest and how to find reference to them'. On the part of Dlakwa (2011) "The University of Maiduguri provides a more serious training programme for more in-depth use of the library resources which is compulsory for all students from part one to part three called the "USE OF LIBRARY" under the department of General Studies'. Okon (2008) emphasized the need for user education programme when he noted that ' The meaning of user education is anchored on the fact that majority of users, especially in higher institutions have difficulties in retrieving information in the ocean of knowledge that daily confront them in most libraries. He added that there is therefore need to carefully nurture students in ways that would ultimately enable them to self-navigate the myriads of sourcing for materials that form the focus of their scholarly endeavours.

2.4 Imperative of Library User Education: The Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku Experience

User education is an eye opener to potential library users. It gives one the idea of knowing that there is a bulging need that requires being satisfied with information. Malakar & Manlunching (2014) stated that users are in constant need of information and the average user spends an estimated twenty percent of his time searching for it. However, with user education programme this time can be saved because as long as the user knows his information need, the steps to take in accessing these needs would be at his finger

tips due to knowledge acquired on using the library in user education programme.

Also, user education programmes encourages more students to use the library (Dian, 2021). This is because no matter how good a library is, if the services is not used it would be a lie of the role it was established to play. Since the introduction of the teaching of the use of library to delta state polytechnic Ogwashi-uku, particularly since library tour became a compulsory practical in teaching the course, there has been a difference in the massive turnout of students into the library to use its resources. This is because there is now more awareness of the available resources in the library, and students are convinced that the seen resources will greatly support their academic pursuit. This supports the old saying that seeing is believing. The electronic library usually leaves them in awe during library tour; also, informing them that the internet service is free has also encouraged research among our students in no small measure.

Furthermore, user education is a channel with which the library uses to market itself. It will avail the librarians the opportunity to let potential library users know the services offered by the library, opening and closing hours, rules and regulations guiding the library among others. In this way, library users would already know what to expect when they visit the library. This approach has also given us an edge in the polytechnic as some mistakes that students make such as carrying their bags, food, drinks into the library are cushioned.

Finally, library registration has been very poor over the years; this could be attributed to students not knowing the need for it and may also not know what they could benefit from registering with the polytechnic library. However, there has been a great turnaround since the teaching of the use of library was introduced as a means of user education aside the general new student orientation exercise. The successful transition is evident in the rush hour registration of new users that we often experience yearly as fresh students resume with the nostalgic feeling of experiencing what they have been taught in the class by actually visiting the library to consult its resources.

3.2 Challenges of User Education Programme

On the challenges that militate against the user education programme, Joseph (2003) observed that in Nigerian Polytechnics" enough programmes that could help users in the use of library are not in place".The observation of Joseph (2003) was buttressed by the 2005 communiqué issued by the Committee of Monotechnics and Polytechnic (COMPLIN) at the 30th annual meeting held at Nassarawa State Polytechnic. COMPLIN observed the positive effect of the teaching of use of library on the effective usage of the library by students and advocated that the course be made a compulsory one unit credit course and it should be handled by professional librarians. Edem and Lawal (1996) on their part identified two factors that militate against the user education programme in Nigerian university libraries. According to them, these factors include lack of personnel and lack of professional time for teaching and practical work.

Similarly, Joseph (2005) identified more challenges of user education programme to include over dependence on one day orientation programme, lack of examinable library instruction, lack of collective curriculum for user education in Nigerian tertiary institutions, over concentration on library technical services such as acquisition, cataloguing and classification and shelving of books on the part of the librarian, lack of concentration on information retrieval mechanism and the use of unqualified personnel to teach the use of library in some institution. Furthermore, Okon (2008) as cited by Akalimhe (2011) had identified lack of

standard curriculum for user education in some institutions of higher learning and inability to make user education credit earning course in some university libraries as factors that militate against the user education programme.

However, Joseph (2005) writing on the possible solutions to the problems of user education programme stated that there is need for explicit statement of objectives, availability of infrastructure, qualified trainers, careful choice of teaching methods and regular systematic evaluation.

Conclusion

Based on the consulted studies and experience, it was concluded that students visit and use the library regularly due to acquired knowledge in the teaching of user education programme as a result they now use the library to meet their information needs. The study of the "Use of Library" (GNS 103) has imparted positively on their library usage because it has opened their mind to taking advantage of the various library resources and making the most of it in supporting their academic pursuit. Some of the difficulties that they would have encountered in consulting library materials became a walk over due to the skill they have acquired through the study of the course. In all ramifications, it could only get better as the importance of user education cannot be over emphasized in ensuring effective use of the library by students and the library community at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for this study:

1. There is the need for the library user education programme in institutions of higher learning to be overhauled to make it more standard by introducing the course for HND 1 students so that apart from using the knowledge acquired in the library to solve academic problems it can be extended to using it to solve professional problems. It is advocated that the course be added to HND 1 students in Polytechnics to further impart in them the information literacy abilities and if possible to have the course titled 'INFORMATION LITERACY'.

2. There is also need to ensure that only qualified librarians are made to handle the teaching of the course "Use of library" universally and staff training and re-training should be encouraged by the parent institution.

3. That reasonable time be allocated in the timetable to enable practical aspect of the course to be taught effectively. It shall be an added advantage if audio-visual materials are used to make the practical lessons more interesting.

4. That library user education programme should be extended to pupils and students of primary and secondary schools in order to inculcate in them library use culture.

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