

Appraisal of User Education Programme on the Use of Library Resources by Distance Education Students of National Open University of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study evaluated user-education programmes of selected national Open University of Nigeria study center libraries. This is because the effective use of library resources by distance education students is a vital tool for improvement in long-life learning, skills acquisition, information searching and research. Any higher institution devoid of library user education programme is bound to have poor learning outcome

Methodology/Approach: Three research questions guided 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 study center (260). Data for the study were collected through researchers' developed questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist duly validated by lecturers from department of library and information science, university of Nigeria Nsukka. The result was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation

Findings: The findings revealed among others that a positive effect existed in favour of user education, especially when the duration of library orientation period is increased and made compulsory for all registered students.

Originality/value: Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that, effort should be made to improve user education programme in National Open University of Nigeria.

Key words: Appraisal, User Education Program, Library Resources, Distance education Students

Paper type: Empirical

Introduction

The library supports learning and research needs of its users for that particular institution. 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 users 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 expanding 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) and Idoko, Asogwa & Ugwuany (2015) 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 ways: Thus it’s 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.
- To enable users to understand the classification schemes in any library so as to be able to locate materials with little or no problem.
- To be able to see library catalogues as indexes to the entire collection and use them as such.
- 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 institutions 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 researchers 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 user education programmes in National Open University. Specifically the study intends to:

1. Establish the effect of the 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 user education programmes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the effect of user education programme on the use of library resources?
2. What problems affect the adequacy, competence and motivation of staff in user education programmes?
3. What are the ways to improve on user education programmes?

Review of Related Literature

Many authors have conducted studies on user education programmes in an attempt to establish the relationship between user educational programmes and utilization of library resources. Authors like Edem and Lawal (2006) conducted a study of user education programme in twenty-two university libraries in Nigeria using Questionnaire marked and personal interviews. It was discovered that the programme was bewildered by many problems, namely; inadequate time for teaching and practical work, lack of qualified staff, poor attitude, inadequate funding and poor evaluation method. Consequently, they suggested that the programme be overhauled entirely to accommodate more time and increase manpower to cover teaching and practical exposure. They finally recommended on aggressive user education programme in the universities for one semester deviation, which should carry a compulsory status for all first years’ students and taught by only professional academic librarians. This study though comprehensive, failed to involve the direct beneficiaries who are the students for confirmation of findings.

An empirical study carried out by Kudu, (2006) evaluated user education programmes of Collages of Education in Plateau and Nasarawa states of Nigeria via a survey design. The findings were inadequate and qualified staffing resulting in overcrowded learning environment

which prompted the use of traditional methods of teaching to the detriment of modern methods; lack of staff training and development opportunities; inappropriate timing. The instruments used in the study were interviewed. The findings revealed that there was inadequate qualified staff, lack of training and development opportunities, use of traditional method of teaching and inappropriate timing of lectures resulting to overcrowding the available learning environment.

Agosto, Paoney and Ipock (2007) conducted a written survey of 97 female and male library users at two United State libraries. In addition to exploring gender related variance in the reasons for which young people use the library, the survey investigated how frequently the respondents needed information relating to 12 major topic areas and how useful they considered the library in helping them to find information related to their topics, largely, the results indicated no significant gender difference in the respondents reasons for using libraries or in their frequency of information needs. The only major gender difference was the girls' tendency to rate libraries as more useful in helping them to meet their personal information needs.

An empirical evaluative study carried out by Ankpa (2000) into the student's use of university of Maiduguri library. The survey-designed method was adopted and a random stratified sampling was used to draw a sample of 852 males and 198 female respondents using a frequency table of absolute relative and cumulative frequency percentages discovered that majority of the students do not use the catalogue owing to lack of skills. To this end, he recommended that use of library course be redesigned, and be taught for not less than two semesters. It is also his suggestion that the present orientation course be reproduced in video format and shown to students in their hostels common room at regular intervals. Although this is not directly on user education studies, its findings and suggestions have far reaching implication for user education. Also in use of the library programme, Busawayo (2003) examines the perception of freshmen of the University of Edo-Ekiti to the course, which had compulsory status to ascertain the level of its acceptance. The extent of the achievement of the objectives of the course was also investigated. Adopting a survey design, a random sample of 280 freshmen was drawn from the faculties of

Arts, Agricultural Science and Social Science. Questionnaires were distributed and analyzed using simple frequency tables and percentages. At the end of the investigation it was discovered that though the perception of the students was positive they advised that the course be separated from 'use of English'. In line with that, the researcher recommended the separation but cautioned that it be taught by qualified librarians. This study though had been able to elicit some response from the students, the sole use of 'Yes' or 'No' type of questionnaire made the research too simplistic to attract meaningful response from the respondents. On user education as a whole, Nnadi (2004) in partial fulfillment for an MLS degree of the University of Nigeria Nsukka surveyed the user education programmes of 5 universities in South Eastern Nigeria, with a sample of 319 library users and 26 librarians drawn through incidental sampling. Separate questionnaires were designed for 2 different groups. Using simple frequency tables, data were analyzed which revealed that library orientation and instruction were the mostly used and that the course had a structure. Nevertheless, lack of funds is its major setback. Consequently he recommended for improved funding, the delineation of students into faculties and the introduction of Information Communication Technology in the libraries.

The evaluation of the Web as a medium of user education is not left out in empirical evaluative studies of user education. It is in this vein that Cox and Housewright (2001) carried out a study on the collaboration of faculty and librarians at California state university in the use of the web in library user education. In the study, 150 freshmen were tested on the programme using both objective and subjective methods of evaluation such as class profiling, grading and student self-evaluation. In the analysis, bar charts were used. The findings were that the students were happy with the home page and used it effectively to know the floor plan and to access the catalogue and other databases. Students were also able to evaluate the websites using Jun Kapoun's seven criteria. However it was discovered that designing the programme needs expertise. The study thus recommended the use of the web for user education in all academic libraries as it eliminates the overcrowded nature of the traditional approach. It also recommended that assessment be conducted to determine goals and be delivered on-line. The study finally advised that distant

education faculties should take advantage of web-based instrument to provide their class and also utilizes synchronous and asynchronous methods to solicit students' feedback. This studies though relevant, but the not cover the area of the effect of library user education to the use of library resources which the present study intends to cover.

The Effect of the Library User Education on the Use of Library Resources: 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 needs to be reduced by making the information finding and retrieval process easier.

Problem Militating Against the Adequacy, Competence and Motivation of Staff in the User Education Programme:

The data gathered from the study via interview and questionnaire indicated that knowledge of subject matter is vital in impacting user education to the students. Other factors identified through the questionnaire are student's participation class, control, use of orientation and conferences. 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.

Ways of Improving User Education Programmes

From the responses from the questionnaires and interview, library user education can be improve 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 observe that library and information skills improve when the skills are course related.

Looking at result on table 2, items 3 and 4, it shows that there are needs to affect the curriculum standard of user education to 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 Effect of library education, problems and ways of improving user education contents and coverage of the programme accommodates information development, learning, teaching and research within and outside the universities

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 the study consisted of 808 second year students of National Open University from the three centres in Kaduna (200), Enugu (348) and Apapa (260) The sampling technique adapted was total enumeration, this is because the whole population was taken as the sample.

The instruments used for this study is a Self-designed Questionnaire and an interview schedule. 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 only. Provision was given for personal suggestions from respondents. Each of the research questions were distributed to the

respondents with the help of research assistants. All the items were rated on 4 point rating scale.

The second instrument used for the study is the National Open University Librarians Interview Schedule (NLIS) which was used to collect data from the librarians and lecturers of the three selected centre libraries and it comprise of seven sections namely: Qualification and Experience, Type of User Education Programmes, Methodology adopted, Perception on Status, Timing, Duration, Content and Facilities, Impact of the programme, Staffing and Suggestions. The instrument (structured questionnaire) was face validated by expert. They corrected the grammatical errors, sequencing and ordering of the items of the instruments and suitability of the response tags among others.

Three research assistants who are staff of the university library under study 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, while a trained research assistant helped in jotting down the salient points.

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

Result

Research Question 1: What is the effect of the programme on the use of library resource?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the effect of user education programme to the use of library resources. N=808

| Item | Study Centre | | | | | | Total | | R D | |
|--|---------------------|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------|------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Kaduna study centre | | Enugu study centre | | Apapa study centre | | Mean | SD | 7 th | Ineffective |
| | 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 |
| 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 |

Notes SD standard deviation R ranks D Decision

Table 1 above shows the mean rating of the respondents evaluating the effect of the library user education on 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

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on opinion of adequacy, competence and motivation of staff in user education programme N=808

| Item | Study Centre | | | | | | | | Total | R | D |
|--|---------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----------------|-----------|---|
| | NOUN, Kaduna study centre | | NOUN, Enugu study centre | | NOUN 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 at the conference | 3.57 | .79 | 3.36 | .80 | 3.55 | .82 | 3.48 | .81 | 4 th | Adequate | |
| 3 Class control (discipline) | 3.64 | .53 | 3.50 | .61 | 3.51 | .54 | 3.54 | .57 | 3 rd | Friendly | |
| 4 Student participation | 3.64 | .65 | 3.50 | .62 | 3.72 | .45 | 3.61 | .59 | 2 nd | Effective | |
| 5 adequacy of staff at the orientation | 3.77 | .50 | 3.74 | .51 | 3.75 | .44 | 3.75 | .48 | 1 st | Effective | |
| 6 | 3.43 | .60 | 3.53 | .53 | 3.44 | .52 | 3.48 | .55 | 4 th | Adequate | |

Notes SD standard deviation R ranks D Decisions

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 Use computers in locating and retrieving information (1.22) had the greatest spreads of scores.

Research Question 2 What problems affect the adequacy, competence and motivation of staff in user education programmes?

(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 is the way to improve on user education programmes

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on the ways to improve on user education programmes N=808

| Strategies | Study Centre | | | | Total | | | | R | D | |
|------------|---|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------|------|-----|-----------------|-----------|
| | Kaduna study centre | | Enugu study centre | | Apapa study centre | | Total | | | | |
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | | |
| 1 | The orientation be conducted when all students 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 |
| 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 |

Notes SD standard deviation R ranks D Decision

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

Conclusion

The use of library by students in tertiary institutions is very paramount to academic performance because library is the heart of academic excellence. User education programme in the academic setting is a useful approach to guide all users of the library the way to use library resources. The study has shown that user education is constrained by various factors, so affecting the image of library and library use instruction patterns. The responses illustrate orientation plays active role in user education. These practices of user education programmes are organised on formal and informal schemes. The survey suggests that, despite many difficulties, there remains some deal of activities in this field; students in National Open universities are exposed to library orientation,

and basic bibliographic and audio visual instruction.

Regarding user education programme method apply in the centers, the study discover an unimpressive result of lack of method adopted. This observation portrayed that National Open University of Nigeria has not fully embrace the challenges and gains of user education. The reasons for not establishing user education as an imperative element of higher education cannot solely be described in terms of resource problems. It emerges from the responses from the interview that most librarians are not equipped with required knowledge and training to teach users effectively.

In summary, library user education can encompass a broad range of activities. Its need and importance have received increasing recognition to which librarians have responded to with considerable success. Yet, there is some concern how this success can be continued with to encompass the broader concept of information literacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were 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 mandate the introduction of use of library right from the nursery and primary school levels.

- 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 unit course.
- iv. Instruction on Information Technology (computer) in the library should be improved upon.

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