

Information Literacy: A Panacea for Unhealthy Youth Development in 21st Century Nigeria

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Abstract

Purposes: *This paper discussed Information Literacy as a panacea for unhealthy youth development in 21st century Nigeria.*

Design/Methodology: *The study is a descriptive survey. It is guided by four objectives and four research questions. The population was made up of 300 fresh graduates (youth coppers) drawn from the earliest federal university in each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The instrument used to generate data is questionnaire titled Information Literacy a panacea for unhealthy youth development (ILPUYD). Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16 (SPSS 16.0) was used to analyze the data generated, using mean and standard deviation and the results were presented in tables.*

Findings: *It was found out amongst others that all three known types of Information Literacy programmes exist in Nigerian Universities. The study also revealed that one of the major obstacles to Information Literacy Skills acquisition by Nigerian youth is that the existing programmes lay too much emphasis on the use of the library.*

Originality and Value: *The study recommended amongst other things that Library and Information managers in Nigeria should look beyond the use of the library alone in teaching information literacy and see information literacy in its broader context.*

Key words: *Information literacy, panacea, unhealthy youth's development, Nigeria*

Introduction

Nigeria, a West African Country gained Independence from British Colonial masters in 1960. Nigerian population is predominantly youths, with young people under 35 years accounting for about 50 percent of the country's population of over one hundred and forty million (Igwe, 2011). At independence, Nigeria held so many promises for herself, the African continent and indeed people of African descent all over the world (Osaghae, 2008). In those days, the Nigerian currency could compete favourably with the British pound and even out-compete the American dollar. The expectations that greeted the arrival of Nigeria as a nation state was based on solid material realities which were amply exemplified by the existence of a vibrant, hardworking and creative population, enormous natural resources, very clement climate and abundant life-sustaining vegetation, a federal political system deliberately anchored on a constitutional order (World Almanac Education Group, 2008).

At the turn of the 21st century, things changed drastically for the Nigerian state. No longer was Nigeria known by her abundant resources in human and material, but by social vices

perpetuated by her citizens and corrupt practices of her leaders (Achebe, 2010). There were militancy in all the parts of the country, most notorious in the oil rich regions of the Niger Delta, and incessant cases of kidnapping, bank robberies, ritual killings, politically inspired assassinations and the most recent addition to crimes "human trafficking" (Ogbu, 2003). Poverty stares citizens on the face and unemployment wide spread.

In the midst of these confusions is the "Nigerian youth", the future of the country with education and a certificate that sinks him into more confusion, staring into space. He has no clear vision of the direction to follow because he lacks the ability to operate effectively in the modern society (Ajeluorou, 2010). This is as a result of the fact that the certificate and education he possesses are products of 19th century constructs which Bundy (2008) opined are operating in unconnected curricular, pedagogical and assessment silos. This type of education has no clear vision and framework for survival in the information intensive world of the 21st century.

Information literacy, seemed the only option available to the Nigerian Youths to get even with colleagues elsewhere or get out of this quagmire

is relegated to the background and receives only lip service from educators and the leadership class. Information literacy has been identified by Pejova, (2005) as a fundamental factor in developing people into successful life and a critical survival skill in the information age. Most youths being not prepared for the challenges of the 21st century, fell into crimes out of ignorance, not having alternative nor weighing the alternatives appropriately and some by choice because of the perceived gains. The Federal Ministry of Youths and Sports created by the Nigerian government with a mandate to continuously encourage policies, programmes, laws and other initiatives that promote and enhance the development of the youths and the protection of their interest seem to have very little to offer. The development of the Nigerian youth is thus left to chance, which should not be.

Statement of the problem

Guiding youth through healthy development is the dream of every government and parents as the reverse will spell catastrophe for the individual and the nation. To produce healthy youths require that governments should pay detailed attention to the curricular of schools under their care. It also requires that schools and colleges should appreciate and integrate the concept of information literacy into their learning programs and play a leadership role in equipping individuals and institutions to take advantages of the opportunities inherent within the information society (Mckella, 2005). The extent to which government and schools pay attention to youths' development in Nigeria has not been established. Thus this study which aims at determining if information literacy could be a panacea to unhealthy youth's development in Nigeria

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study therefore was to find out how Information Literacy programme if well managed can help curb unhealthy youth development in 21st century Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify Information Literacy programmes available to Nigerian youths.
2. To examine the benefits of available Information Literacy programmes to Nigerian youths.
3. To identify the problems militating against Information Literacy Skills acquisition by Nigerian youths.

4. To suggest ways of ameliorating these problems.

Research question: The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the information literacy programmes available to Nigerian youths?
2. What are the benefits of available information literacy programmes to the Nigerian youths?
3. What are the problems militating against information literacy programmes in Nigeria?
4. In what ways can the problems militating against Information Literacy be ameliorated?

Significance of the study

The process of developing healthy youth in 21st century Nigeria cannot be left to chance. Nigerian youths of today are growing in a world where changes in communication, technology, culture, politics, demographics etc are creating challenges, vulnerabilities and less opportunity unlike before. Concerted efforts are therefore needed to provide support, relationships, experiences and opportunities that promote positive outcome for youths. This work will be of help to education authorities in planning education curriculum for tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It will help academic librarians to widen their professional horizon and make them more relevant to the Nigerian society. It will also help to direct the pathways of youthful life towards a successful life later on.

Scope of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the youthful age is taken to be people between the ages of 18 and 30. In Nigeria, people below the age of 18 years are not admitted into institutions of higher learning and those above 30 years are not permitted to attend the national youth service program. Hence in Nigeria, the youthful age is positioned between 18 and 30 years. The study is therefore limited to youths on national youth service programme.

Literature Review

Information Literacy

Information literacy is the ability of one to conquer his environment using information as a tool. Information literacy enables one to tread where others fled. The difference between wealth and poverty, healthy development and unhealthy development depends on the information gap between the two. The Presidential Committee on Information Literacy

of the American Library Association states that for a person to be information literate, the person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. Information literacy focuses on learning as a process for solving problems. It's about developing people to the extent that they can explore complex issues by generating a web of questions through which they arrive at the difficult truth (Bundy, 2008).

Information Literacy is very important in the lives of youths. It helps in teaching youth how to think as well as how to act in challenging situations. It helps in developing youths critical and creative abilities (Dangani, 2009). Jones and Waddle (2002) observed that information literacy is about building the assets within young people to help them make better choices and overcome the storm and stress of adolescent life. Information literacy is fundamental in developing people into successful lifelong learners and is being increasingly recognized as core learning and working competence and a critical survival skill in an information age (Pejova, 2005). In 21st century Nigeria, characterized by reforms, job closures and innovations, information literacy becomes a tool for redirecting and re-skilling young Nigerians. An information literate person can easily adapt to situations. He sees life as a continuous learning experience. He can always learn, unlearn and relearn.

Information literacy is different from traditional literacy, digital literacy or subject literacy. It is all encompassing. It includes both a set of generic skills and competencies as well as skills and concepts that are specific to a given discipline, subject matter area, profession or sector. It is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society (Rasaki, 2008). Information literacy is vital to youths learning. It liberates minds from the shackles of ignorance and equips one with the knowledge to challenge expert opinions. It is a key component of lifelong learning that extends learning beyond the classroom. Apart from these, information literacy directs students' searches to the appropriate sources without waste of time. It also exposes them to current information available in their disciplines, teaches them how to search out information, solve academic and social problems and reduces the possibility of fuzzy thinking and logic (Mckella, 2005). Though information literacy is full of promises,

it is besieged with a number of problems which includes:

1. The inability of educational authorities to clearly define the course content of Information Literacy programmes.
2. The credit load earning of information literacy programmes in Nigerian Universities are too low and duration of the course too short. As such students do not consider the course serious.
3. Most librarians are still reluctant to believe that the role of the librarian has changed and now includes information literacy provider (Bundy, 1998).
4. Laziness on the part of teachers (Librarians) to engage in professional development courses to upgrade their knowledge also constitutes a problem.
5. There is also the problem of Educational Authorities, Politicians, Professional Associations who prefer that people do not know and do not ask questions because of the perceived gains of keeping people in ignorance (Bundy, 1998)

Information literacy programmes available to Nigerian youths

Information literacy programmes in Nigeria exist in Nigerian Institutions of higher Learning. It started in the 80's in form of user education programmes which covered library orientation and bibliographic instruction to new University Students (Fidzani, 2006). Information literacy as it exists today is a product of advances in ICT and its accompanying knowledge revolution. The types of Information literacy programmes offered in different Nigerian Institutions of higher learning can be grouped under three categories. They are:

1. **Formalized Credit bearing Courses.** In some Nigerian Universities like the University of Ilorin, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Federal University of Technology, Akure and Lagos State University to mention but a few, Information Literacy form part of accredited communications skill course or part of General Studies Course which is compulsory for all first year students.
2. **User education programmes.** User education programmes are organized by libraries for their patrons, mostly to introduce the patrons to the content of the library. The programmes range from

one off session on the use of the library and its resources to structured sessions offered throughout the year.

3. **Course Integrated Instruction.** In some Nigerian Universities, Librarians forge partnership with faculties to develop course integrated programmes in which Information skills and problem solving skills are integrated into the teaching and learning of one of the core courses of the programme of study.

Ways of enhancing information literacy programmes in Nigerian universities

There are various ways in which the gains of information literacy can be enhanced. Some of them are as follows:

1. **Use of Course Integrated Approach** In this method Information Literacy programmes are incorporated into the core courses of study of each Faculty. This method ensures that all enrolled students partake in information literacy training.
2. **Tutorials and Introductory Assignments** This can take the form of Source based quizzes in which students are asked to identify the likely sources of a question or material that can be consulted in solving a particular problem or the form of problem based learning in which students are asked to research a person, place or event based on reference sources listed for them. The students are then encouraged to search out the materials themselves from the library.
3. **Library Workshops** This is a situation in which Information Literacy is promoted through workshops organized in-house by a library to introduce its clients to its resources and as well teach them how to locate information in the library.
4. **Construction and Use of Information Technology Laboratories or Computer Laboratories.** Such laboratories provide youths with access to online periodicals

and encyclopedias or databases of periodicals and encyclopedias as well as training on the use of these databases (Mckella, 2005).

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The measuring instrument used for data collection is questionnaire. The questionnaire titled Information Literacy a panacea for unhealthy youth development (ILPUYD) was face validated by experts. The face validation was to ensure that the instrument is free of ambiguity and is clear enough to measure what it is designed to measure. The questionnaire was divided into four sections A, B, C, and D. Each section contained questions on one research question. The questionnaire was based on a four point Likert Scale of: 1. strongly agree, 2. agree, 3. strongly disagree and 4, Disagree. The respondents were made up of 300 youths drawn from six Universities in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered to youths from each university. The Universities were chosen based on their ages. Hence the oldest University in each geo-political zone was chosen. The Universities are as follows: University of Ibadan (UI) from South West zone, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) from South East zone, University of Benin (UNIBEN) from South South zone, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi (ATBU) from North East zone, Ahmadu Belo University, Zaria (ABU) from North West zone and University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) from North Central zone. The questionnaires were administered to youth corpors posted to Enugu state from the chosen universities, on the days of their community development works in the various local government headquarters of Enugu State where they are serving. Of the three hundred questionnaires given out, two hundred and eighty-nine were completed and returned. The data generated through the questionnaire was analyzed using mean (X) and standard deviation (S). The result was presented in tables.

Result Presentation

Table 1: General Information about respondents, their universities and there geo-political zones

Zones	University	Frequency (Fx)	Percentage (%)
South West	UI	45	15.6
South East	UNN	47	16.2
South South	UNIBEN	48	16.6
North East	ATBU, Bauchi	50	17.3
North West	ABU, Zaria	49	16.9
North Central	UNILORIN	50	17.3
TOTAL		289	100.0

Table 1 above shows the number of responses gotten from each University representing a geopolitical zone in Nigeria and their percentage contribution to the study.

Table 2: Information literacy programmes available in Nigerian Universities. N=289

	Available Information Literacy Programs.	X	S	Decision
1.	Library tours	3.48	.957	Accepted
2.	Library guides	3.49	1.044	Accepted
3.	Bibliographic instruction	2.43	1.378	Not accepted
4.	Library week	2.56	1.442	Accepted
5.	Information retrieval skills	1.97	1.321	Not accepted
6.	Study skills	3.44	1.049	Accepted
7.	Problem based learning	2.16	1.379	Not accepted
8.	Evidence based learning	1.49	1.051	Not accepted
9.	Use of the Library	3.39	1.131	Accepted
10	Information retrieval skills included in faculty core courses	2.28	1.414	Accepted

Table 2 shows that Library tours, Library guides, library week, study skills, use of the library and information retrieval skills included in faculty core courses are available information literacy skills in Nigerian Universities while bibliographic instruction, information retrieval skills, problem based learning and evidence based learning are not taught in Nigerian Universities. Library tours with a standard deviation below one and study skills with a standard deviation slightly above one are the most common information literacy programmes available to Nigerian youth.

Table 3: Benefits of the available Information Literacy Programmes to Youth N=289

	Benefits of available Information Literacy Programmes	X	S	Decision
1	It s teaches the benefits of reading beyond the classroom.	3.53	1.006	Accepted
2	It saves search time by directing users straight to appropriate sources of information	3.35	1.086	Accepted
3.	It exposes one to all information sources in the library.	3.12	1.285	Accepted
4.	It exposes users to information sources for specific needs.	2.97	1.266	Accepted
5.	It teaches how to search databases for information	3.25	1.156	Accepted
6.	It teaches how to search the internet for information	2.82	1.388	Accepted
7.	It teaches how to cite materials used for study	3.34	1.171	Accepted
8.	It teaches how to use the library	3.63	.823	Accepted
9.	It teaches how to be lifelong learners	2.87	1.340	Accepted
10.	It teaches how to act and think in challenging situations	2.95	1.337	Accepted
11.	It helps to develop critical and creative abilities in youth	3.32	1.153	Accepted
12.	It helps one to know when there is need for information	3.44	1.023	Accepted

Table 3 shows that all the itemized entries in section B of the questionnaire are the benefits of Information Literacy programme to Nigerian youths as all the respondents concur to it. The table also shows that information literacy

programme throughout Nigeria lays more emphasis on how to use the library. This can be seen from the standard deviation of less than one of item eight (it teaches how to use the library) of the question.

Table 4: The Problems militating against the acquisition of Information Literacy Skills by Nigerian Youths N=289

s/n	Problems.	X	S	Decision
	It is not a credit yielding course; as such students are not taking it seriously.	3.00	1.006	Accepted
2.	The time duration of the course is too short	2.76	1.164	Accepted
3.	It lays emphasis mostly on how to use the library.	3.28	.703	Accepted
4.	The teachers of the programme are not well acquainted with the programme themselves.	3.13	1.073	Accepted
5.	The library computer laboratories are not functional.	2.94	.835	Accepted
6.	The school administration is against the teaching of Information Literacy to youths.	1.91	.906	Not accepted
7.	Librarians are not the teachers of the programme.	2.75	.986	Accepted
8.	The course content is difficult to comprehend.	2.37	1.252	Not accepted

Table 4 shows that the problems hindering the acquisition of information literacy skills by Nigerian youth are items 1, 2,3,4,5, and 7 of the entries in table three. Out of these, items 3 and

5 with standard deviations below one (.703 & .835) are the most important problems hindering the acquisition of Information Literacy skills by Nigerian youth.

Table 5: Ways of solving the problems of Information Literacy acquisition by Nigerian youth N=289

s/n	Ways of solving the problems of Information Literacy acquisition by Nigerian youth.	X	S	Decision
1.	Using Integrated course Approach in teaching Information Literacy	3.81	.390	Accepted
2.	Production and distribution of Library Guides to students	3.67	.467	Accepted
3.	Use of source based quizzes.	3.22	.998	Accepted
4.	Organization of Library Workshops	2.89	.986	Accepted
5.	Construction of Information Technology laboratories and making them accessible to students.	3.20	.965	Accepted
6.	Upgrading the professional status of the teachers of Information Literacy	3.22	.925	Accepted
7.	Including Information Literacy programme in the core courses of each faculty.	2.94	.866	Accepted
8.	Extending the duration of the course	2.70	1.235	Accepted

Table 5 shows that all the itemized entries are ways of solving the problems of information literacy skills acquisition by Nigerian youth. All with the exception of item 8 (with standard deviation greater than one (.1.235)) are strongly recommended ways of solving the problems of information literacy programme among Nigerian youth.

programmes are structured one-off activities while others are structured continuous activities. A situation that can be described as good if managed appropriately. One-off activities are activities that have no follow ups. It is one session that is complete on its own. Library tours, Library guides, Library week belong to this category while structured continuous activities or programmes are programmes that are planned to last over a period of time sequentially. Bibliographic instruction, use of the Library, problem based learning, evidence based learning, Study skills and Information

Discussion of Result

The result showed that all three types of information literacy programmes exist in Nigerian Universities. Some of these

retrieval skills belong to this category. A combination of the two in any one university can produce youths that are information literate. The one-off activities complements the structured continuous activities by offering more relaxed atmosphere for students to err their views and ask questions on topics they do not understand very well in the structured continuous activities.

All the respondents are aware of the benefits of Information literacy but a close examination of youthful life in Nigeria shows that the awareness does not translate into knowledge. Take the case of Area boys in Lagos, Lagos state. According to Momoh (2000) most of the Area boys are unemployed graduates, drop outs and artisans who see crime as the only option for survival. An information literate youth will not fall for crime easily. He can always make a fresh start.

The responses also showed that Information literacy programmes in Nigeria lay too much emphasis on the use of the library. The standard deviation of all the responses on the benefits of Information Literacy except that, on the use of the library being less than one attest to this view. Information literacy is not about teaching how to use the library rather it is about turning people into lifelong learners (Nishimuro, 1999).

Again, the time allotted to information literacy programmes in Nigerian Universities is too short. A semester or two allotted the programme does not give the students the opportunity to comprehend and think through the programme. Most of them are unable to make out anything meaningful from it within that short period. As such it gives the impression that the programme is not serious as such not worth wasting time on. Such programmes lack the capacity to produce information users who exhibit adequate information literacy attributes (Rasaki, 2008).

Moreover in the 21st century, where access and ability to use ICT's are crucial to an individual's survival and positive participation in society, the absence of a functional and accessible computer laboratory in any academic library is an anomaly that should not be imagined. Academic libraries are supposed to be pacesetters in ICT acquisition and use. The demands of 21st century librarianship had placed ICT instruction at the foot of librarians and academic librarians are no exceptions to this. Bundy (2008) posited that the 21st century librarian must be ahead of technological developments in ICT and must be able to teach users how to use them.

The response that Librarians are not the teachers of Information Literacy in Nigerian Universities is not true. A search through literature reveals that librarians are the teachers of information literacy at the University of Lagos, Federal University of Technology Akure and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Maybe the students are not informed of this fact.

Information literacy as we know it today is a new concept. Most instructors in the field are not well acquainted with the concept. There is therefore need for professional development on the part of these instructors to bring them up to expected standard where they will be more beneficial to their students, organisation and society.

Improving information literacy skills acquisition in Nigerian entails improving on what is already available. These include making information literacy programmes good credit yielding courses, upgrading the professional status of the teachers of the programme, extending the duration of the course etc.

Summary of Findings

1. All the three types of information literacy programmes exist in Nigerian Universities.
2. Nigerian youths are aware of the benefits of information literacy programmes.
3. Time allocated to information literacy programmes in Nigerian Universities is too short.
4. Information literacy programmes in Nigeria lays much emphasis on how to use the library.
5. There is need for continuous professional development for teachers of information literacy in Nigerian Universities.
6. Information Technology laboratory in Nigerian Universities are not functional and accessible to students.

Recommendations

To promote healthy development among Nigerian youths, the researchers recommend as follows:

1. All structured continuous information literacy programmes should be made serious credit carrying courses.
2. Functional computer laboratories should be constructed in all academic libraries. Library and Information managers in Nigeria should look beyond use of the library in teaching information literacy

and see information literacy in its broader context.

3. Continuous professional development should be made compulsory for academic librarians.
4. The Nigerian Government should study the course content of Information literacy programmes in Nigerian Universities to ensure that it will be capable of molding Nigerian youths towards healthy development.

Conclusion

Information literacy has been identified as a fundamental factor in developing people into successful life and a critical survival skill in the information age. As such, it merits a prime position in the lives of youths to help guard them against unhealthy development.

In Nigerian Universities, there are three types of Information literacy programmes that exist and Nigerian youths are aware of the benefits however, the time allocated to information literacy programme is too short and should be increased.

To address unhealthy youth development, information literacy programme must go beyond the use of library and more emphasis must be laid on professional development for teachers of information literacy to

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