Chapter 74

Information Literacy Awareness, Perception and Skills Assessment Using Students of National Open University in Southwest Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to find out the level of information literacy (IL) awareness, perception and skills of students of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). It was based on the fact that IL instruction course is missing in the curriculum of NOUN, thus, it is therefore a necessity to ascertain awareness and perception levels of the students about IL issues well as their skills assessment test. Survey research method was adopted involving 197 respondents that were found during visits to the four study centres for data collection. Questionnaire was used for data collection, which was administered, properly filled, returned, and used for data analysis with descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that NOUN students have poor level of awareness and perception about IL, as a result of rejection level in seven out of ten statements. However, the other accepted three see IL issues as antidote to poor IL skills of students. Generally, the IL assessment test shows that a greater percentage of the students, when summed together lack IL skills. Avenues through which they acquired IL skills were analysed as well as the challenges affecting their IL skills development. Recommendations were made among which are integration of IL Instruction into the curriculum of NOUN and provision of adequate and functional human, infrastructural and information resources for result-oriented service delivery in the libraries.

1. INTRODUCTION

The utilization of information resources in libraries, the Internet or other sources of information is dependent on certain skills and competencies. In this digital era, the skills are not only for paper-based libraries or e-libraries alone, but for hybrid libraries and information systems that provide both onsite and online information resources as well as render both onsite and online information services to their users. In other words, the skills are not only library-use skills, computer use skills, online catalogue use skills, information retrieval skills, or online accessibility and self-efficacy skills, but an aggregate of all the afore-mentioned skills known as information literacy skills. Thus, Information Literacy skills are set of competencies which information users are expected to possess for identifying, accessing, retrieving, evaluating, using, and communicating information resources of all kinds in adherence to principles of information ethics. These skills are essential for stakeholders in the academic environments, be it lecturers or students. Specifically, the possession of the skills by students enhances their participation in core academic activities, and facilitates academic productivity and performance among them. It is therefore required that students of universities should be in possession of these skills, and this can be realized through structured academic programme of instruction, which at present referred to as information literacy (IL) instruction.

Library use education, use of library, bibliographic instructions, and information skills training are some of the terminologies used for the education of library users on how to make adequate use of information resources. However, with time, due to rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the emergence of Internet and e-based information resources, the terms gave way to IL instruction as the appropriate nomenclature. This was after an evolutionary process that metamorphosed to

the concept, which is more holistic and acceptable to all (Skov & Skoerbak, 2003; Bavakutty & Nasirudheen, 2008), especially stakeholders and practitioners in information professions, educational technology and general education. IL instruction is aimed at inculcating information literacy skills in students for result-oriented utilization of all kinds of information resources. Thus, there is the need for full coverage of the content of IL instructions instead of use of library as taught in Nigerian universities (Abubakar & Isyaku, 2012).

Meanwhile, studies have shown that students in conventional federal, state and private universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria have poor IL skills (Issa, Amusan & Daura, 2009; Oyedum, 2010; Igwe & Esimokha, 2012; Babalola, 2012; Ekenna & Mabawonku, 2013; Ilogho & Nkiko, 2014). However, there is unavailability of such empirical studies in the case of open and distance learning (ODL) institutions like National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). That informed the decision of using the University for the study. It should be noted that the university offers certificates, diploma, first degrees, postgraduate diploma, masters and doctoral programmes using its study centres across the six geo-political zones of the country.

NOUN was established as a distance learning model of university to provide functional, cost-effective, flexible learning which adds lifelong value to quality education for all who seek knowledge in Nigeria. It came on board on 22nd July 1983, suspended on 25th April 1984, and was resuscitated on 12th April 2001. The university operates from its 13-storey glass house, which is the administrative headquarters located at 14 –16 Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria (www.nou.edu.ng/aboutNOUN/). Justifying the emergence of NOUN as ODL university, which is described as an important element of future education globally (Moore & Tait, 2002; Ikinya & Okoth, 2013), Okojie (2009) posits that:

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