
Evaluation of User-Education Programmes of Selected National Open University of Nigeria Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Effective use of library resources by distance 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. Six 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 for the study 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 effect 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

Improvement in the conditions for efficient and effective long-life learning and information searching as well as benefiting from library services and their instructional programs are hinged on library user education. Library user education becomes necessary because of dramatic changes in technology and society, which have created an urgent need to teach users on how to become more efficient and independent in their information searching. Similarly, Tiefel (2005) noted that the goals of library user education have expanded from teaching tools to teaching concepts and from library user education to information literacy and life- long learning.

User education programme in this study refers to the concerted effort by the library in inculcating in users' life-long skills to enable them optimally utilize the library and its resources for their study, learning and research. User education provides a platform where librarians introduce new students to

complexities of university library facilities; familiarize users, who have little or no information seeking skills at all with a broad range of library resources in order to develop library skills; and educate them on how to find materials using library catalogues, subject indexes, CD-Roms and the internet. Furthermore, e-mails make it easy to contact anybody at anytime, anywhere in the world in a few seconds.

User education is a significant component of effective library services. Hence user education programme is very crucial for library user's achievements. National Open University of Nigeria operates distance learning. For distance education learners, user education is equally important. The average distant learner is assumed to be an adult, often with work and family obligation. These learners lack peer group support for their studies and usually have limited time for going to the library to search for relevant literature. The individual attention that was initially given to users in the location, exploitation and

usage of library resources and services to meet their information need is no more feasible due to increase in students' admission and enrolment, which is not backed up by commensurate increase in staff strength and even space for effective user education. This situation calls for a well-planned user education programme to ensure that distant students are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge that will enable them to access the library and its resources physically or through the web.

The ability to access the library and its resources physically or through the web makes one efficient in the use of library document which can now be viewed and printed by these distant students at will. User education cannot thrive in any higher institutions without well trained ICT skills librarian's, with a modern, well equipped library as well as planned programme in place. Libraries are indispensable in every tertiary education institutions in which National Open University is one of such. According to Jagannathan (2006), the libraries have always been the major focus for all kinds of learning, whether formal or informal. The library is at the heart of traditional university or college, providing access to collections, where specialist help to support, in the use of technology and being a place to study alone or with fellow students (Waston 2006). University libraries are an integral part of teaching and research. Teaching and research depend upon the library and there is little or no achievement in teaching and research without the library which is a compendium of knowledge. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has also maintained that the primary function of university libraries is to support the teaching-learning process and research activities of the faculties and students. This implies that for any library to meet the expectations of users, it must establish an effective user education programme. University libraries are expected to make available resources accessible to their patrons through the provision of readers' services and user instruction (NUC, 2007).

The most important component of the 21st century library is the user. Every effort put into the establishment of any library is wasted if the library is

not meant for use. The library user is the focal point to the library and information services, as the library primarily exists to satisfy the user (Aina, 2004). As such, a library is said to be productive when the users are satisfied. Users should therefore be familiar with library and its resources and their applications. User education is a vital part of this process. Instruction in using the library resources is an important and effective aspect of user education which provides a collection of skills that have a close relationship to other educational goals.

Many challenges face user education in higher institution, especially National Open University in educating the learner in information literacy and access to the library resources. With the rapid increase in the number of distance students coupled with the increasing number of traditional students seeking information online, academic libraries are faced with the challenge of teaching information literacy to its students who may never walk into the physical library.

Library services and instruction should be brought to the students rather than trying ineffectively to bring these students into the library. Whether they come into the library or visit online, they need assistance to properly access, evaluate, incorporate and utilize information effectively. If actually libraries exist, collect, organize, package and disseminate information and materials for the user, the user must therefore be equipped with the knowledge of how to make effective and efficient use of the various and exiting resources in the library. This knowledge and skill on the use of library resources is better acquired through a well planned and executed user education programme. This brings to bare the need to domicile this study in National Open University of Nigeria libraries to evaluate their user education programmes. National Open University in this study refers to a tertiary institution of learning in Nigeria through which the federal government of Nigeria is using for alternative models to traditional conventional system of education which is limited in scope.

Therefore, the objectives of the Nigerian Open and Distance Learning Programmes include (1)

to widen the access to education and to ensure equity and equality of opportunity for all. (2) Open and Distance Education is to be used as an instrument for poverty alleviation especially in rural communities, by providing opportunities that support Education For all (EFA) and life- long learning. (3) Open and Distance Learning is to equip the Nigerian populace for the emerging global culture of technological literacy via its programmes and the use of information and communication technology (National Open University Manual 2008).

In order to achieve these objectives, and also to meet up with NUC accreditation requirements, Open University of Nigeria is mandated to establish libraries that are fully equipped with internet facilities and seating capacity of not less than one quarter of the student population (National Open University of Nigeria Library Handbook 2008).

The university library thus has the following objective as contained in the (National Open University Library Manual 2008). (i) To provide adequate undergraduate instruction, tutored marked assignments, projects as well as for supplementary reading. (ii) To support teaching, learning process and research needs of the faculties and post graduate students. (iii) To provide materials in support of post graduate, faculty, external and collaborative researches. (iv) To properly organize, preserve and disseminate new and existing information. (v) To cooperate with other academic libraries with a view to developing a network of academic library resources that is at the disposal of all scholars. (vi) To evaluate from time to time the success of the library in meeting the library and information needs of its users.

There is no doubt that the National Open University libraries might meet the National University Commission (NUC) minimum standard, but they may not be maximally utilized, thus making user education inevitable to ensure maximum exploitation and use of the vast resources of the libraries. This might be as a result of lack of adequacy in library staff, motivation and competencies. This therefore implies that the attainment of the objectives of the university libraries is a function of how effective and efficient the library

staff implement user education programme in attaining its educational role of imparting the right skills to the right users at the right time in the right way as stated by Janganathan in Five Laws of Library Information Science (2000). There is a need for the university to evaluate its user education programme so as to determine the strengths and weaknesses and subsequently make amends where necessary. The study therefore intends to evaluate the user education programmes of the National Open University of Nigerian Libraries.

Purpose of the Study

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

1. Identify the types of library user education programmes in National Open University of Nigeria.
2. Establish the methods used in various user education programmes.
3. Determine respondents' perception on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of the user education programme.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the types of library user education programmes in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)?
2. What are the methods used by the National Open University of Nigeria in its library user education programmes?
3. What is the perception of the respondents on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of the 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 and an interview schedule. The Self-designed 13- item questionnaire is titled NOUN Students, User Education Questionnaire (NSUEQ) comprising seven (7) parts/Sections; A, B, C, D, E, F and G. Part A contains personal data of the respondents and their institution while Section B contained 3 items on the type of user education programme. Respondents were required to indicate either available or not available. Section C has four item statements on methods of user education programme. Section D consists of six item statements on perception on status, timing, duration, content and facilities

The second instrument used for the study is the National Open University Librarians Interview Schedule (NLIS) which will be used to collect data from the librarians and lecturers of the three selected

centre libraries. It comprises 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 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, and the Observation Check list, which was replaced by Interview.

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. 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.

RESULTS

Research Question 1 What is the type of User Education Programme in your centre

Table 1: Observation Checklist of types of User Education Programme in National Open University of Nigeria

SN	ICT Resources	Study						Total				D
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		NA	AV	NA	AV	
		NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV					
1	Library orientation							0	3	0%	100%	AV
2	Introduction to library studies (GSP 111)							2	1	100%	0%	NA
3	Bibliographic aids (Library handbook or guides, directional signs etc)							0	0	0%	100%	AV
Total		1	2	1	2	1	2					

The result presented in table 1 showed that, out of the three User Education Programmes, in National Open University of Nigeria, items 1&3 were available, while item 2; Introduction to library studies (GSP 111) is not available in any of the centres.

Research Question 2: What are the methods used by the National Open University of Nigeria in its library user education programmes

Table 2: Percentage distribution of methods used by the National Open University of Nigeria in its library user education programmes

	Methods	Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Total		D
		No	Yes	No	Yes	no	yes	no	Yes	
1	Tour: Library tour during orientation	69 (79.3%)	18 (20.7%)	108 (81.2%)	25 (18.8%)	85 (85.0%)	15 (15.0%)	262 (81.9%)	58 (18.1%)	NA
2	Audiovisuals presentations (e.g., video programmes, slides, power points) at the orientation	68 (78.2%)	19 (21.8%)	115 (86.5%)	18 (13.5%)	83 (83.0%)	17 (17.0%)	266 (83.1%)	54 (16.9%)	NA
3	Lectures: Lectures during orientation	20 (23.0%)	67 (77.0%)	56 (42.1%)	77 (57.9%)	33 (33.0%)	67 (67.0%)	109 (34.1%)	211 (65.9%)	A
4	Seminar: Presentation of seminars at orientation	67 (77.0%)	20 (23.0%)	124 (93.2%)	9 (6.8%)	86 (86.0%)	14 (14.0%)	277 (86.6%)	43 (13.4%)	NA

Table 2 above shows a percentage distribution of methods used by the National Open University of Nigeria in its library user education programmes. The analysis showed that out of four

listed method in the study three are not applicable in the study centres, while one is applicable.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of the respondents on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of the programmes?

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on perception of the respondents on the status, timing, duration, content and facilities of the programmes.

		Study Centre						Total		R	Decision
		Kaduna study centre		Enugu study centre		Apapa study centre		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	Library orientation be made optional	2.14	1.20	2.14	1.13	2.06	1.20	2.12	1.17	6 th	Disagree
2	Appropriateness of the timing for orientation	2.34	1.11	2.22	1.03	2.08	1.16	2.21	1.10	4 th	In appropriate
3	Adequacy of duration for the orientation	2.41	.91	2.20	1.12	2.47	1.30	2.34	1.13	3 rd	Inadequate
4	Adequacy of items for the orientation	2.23	1.05	2.23	1.11	2.02	.93	2.16	1.04	5 th	Inadequate
5	Adequacy of classrooms for lectures	3.13	4.45	2.73	1.02	2.75	1.13	2.84	.49	1 st	Adequate
6	Adequacy of teaching materials	2.76	1.13	2.10	1.01	2.42	1.13	2.38	1.11	2 nd	Inadequate

Table 3 above shows the mean rating of the respondents 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 divulge that five out of six-listed item were perceived negatively by the respondents.

Furthermore, the overall mean indication from the table showed the following mean scores by the respondents. Adequacy of classrooms for lectures (mean = 2.84) is ranked highest and seen as the only item with positive perception by the respondents, while Library orientation be made optional (Mean = 2.12) is ranked lowest.

Others includes, Appropriateness of the timing for orientation (Mean = 2.21), Adequacy of duration for the orientation (Mean = 2.34), Adequacy of items for the orientation (Mean = 2.16) and Adequacy of teaching materials (Mean = 2.38).

The standard deviation in the study showed that the scores spread out mostly among data in Library orientation be made optional (1.17).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1. Increasing the Duration orientation period will have positive effect on user education
2. Use of orientation favours user education
3. In National Open University students are not engaged in tour during orientation.
4. National Open University uses Lecture during student orientation
5. Respondents are opposed to making library orientation optional
6. User Education in National Open University has impacted positively in use of referencing.
7. The respondents accepted that orientation be conducted when all student must have registered and settled.

DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of research question one as presented in table 1 showed that, there are various types of user education programme ((library orientation, introduction to library studies (GSP 111) and Bibliographic aids) in the three sampled National Open University centers used for the study. Out of three User Education Programmes (library orientation, introduction to library studies (GSP 111) and Bibliographic aids), in National Open University of Nigeria, two were available and in use, while one (Introduction to library studies) is not available in any of the centres studied. The non-introduction of GSP 111 to students has serious impact on the development of skills needed by a library user, which makes the realization of educational goals difficult. Also, audiovisuals presentation and sophisticated media such as computer assisted instruction (CAI), video recorders/video tapes, projectors and motion pictures are expensive to acquire and used by librarians, who are in dire need of training and facilities, to prepare slides for overhead projection while demonstrating the various aspects of library. Similarly, the key tool found in the study is the use of library orientation, which featured prominently in all the study centers. This is an indication that Library orientation is a programme used to enhance library skills of the new library users.

This is in line with the view of Ventura College (2005) that library orientation is the most commonly used technique of increasing student familiarity with the library and its resources. According to a survey Report (2004,) the Ventura College Libraries believe a major portion of their 31 percent increase in student's usage statistics, was due to the increase in library orientations that promote usage of library's resource and services. It is therefore necessary for all the study centers to provide and make use of all the user education programmes for improved educational outcome.

Table 2 indicates that: out of four listed methods in the study, three are not applicable in the study centers, while one (the use of library orientation) is applicable. Other methods like the use

of tours, Audio visual presentations and seminars during orientation are lacking. Touring during orientation is crucial to the development of appropriate skills. This is in agreement with Marcus and Beck (2003), who studied the best method of introducing freshmen to library in Western Australia and skills required to use it. In their study, they compared the results of an orientation tour conducted by a traditional librarian and self- guided pleasure trip which included unguided tour of different sections of the library. Two hundred (200) students were selected randomly from a population of 4000 students participated in the alternate forms of orientation. They later completed identical questionnaire in which 57% of them said that they learnt in the self-guided tour as against 41% who benefited more from the guided tour while 2% of the participants were undecided. This was an indicator for an educational advantage in the self-guided tour thereby supporting active learning theories. They stressed on the need for continuing experimentation, innovation and creativity in user education.

Analysis of Research question three as presented in Table 3 shows the mean rating of the respondents 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 divulge that five out of six-listed item were perceived negatively by the respondents.

Furthermore, the overall mean indication from the table showed the following mean scores by the respondents. Adequacy of classrooms for lectures (mean = 2.84) is ranked highest and seen as the only item with positive perception by the respondents, while Library orientation be made optional (Mean = 2.12) is ranked lowest.

Others includes, Appropriateness of the timing for orientation (Mean = 2.21), Adequacy of duration for the orientation (Mean = 2.34), Adequacy of items for the orientation (Mean = 2.16) and Adequacy of teaching materials (Mean = 2.38). The standard deviation in the study showed that that scores spread

out mostly among data in Library orientation be made optional (1.17).

Table 3 indicated this, it was noticed that the three study centres under study disagreed that Library orientation be made optional and devoid of timing. This observation is supported by many scholars whom vehemently indicated the need for orientation as a tool to effective library user education. Thus, library users should be equipped with good library skills and library orientation should be made compulsory to all users. Accordingly, Akhtar Hanif (1986) reported that most students lack understanding and skills regarding how knowledge is organized, and their failure to identify, locate, retrieve and use the needed information adequately. He stressed the need for organized user-education programmes in schools, colleges and university libraries to develop among the students the ability to access, evaluate and use Information from a variety of sources. The above observation put National Open University of Nigeria to a disadvantaged situation, since data obtained from the study indicates the centres of inadequacy in vital provisions of status, timing, duration, content and facilities that are required for smooth operations of user education.

Furthermore, effective user education links naturally to active learning techniques and life-long learning. Active learning, as a method of educating students that allows them to participate in class, takes them beyond the role of passive listener and note taker and to take some direction and initiative. The responses of the questionnaire from librarian and the students who were interviewed in the three institution libraries under study shows that delinquent readership behaviour affect them in the following ways students feel frustrated, feel disappointed, prevents students from carrying out their assignment or research, inadequacy of library materials and students giving up in using the library. Majority of people interviewed recommended strongly that user education must be compulsory for all users, because user education helps developing information seeking and critical skills independently.

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 activity in this field; students in National Open universities are exposed to library orientation, and basic bibliographic and audio-visual instruction.

Regarding to user education programme method applied in the center, the study discovered an unimpressive result of lack of method adopted in the center. This observation portrayed that National Open University of Nigeria has not fully embraced 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, which introduction to use of Library GSP 111 could offer.

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 with considerable success. There is some concern whether this success can be continued to encompass the broader concept of information literacy.

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. GSP 111 should be introduced
- ii. Introduction to library studies (GSP 111) should be properly institutes in all the study centers of National open universities.
- iii. Proper and adequate orientation by the library should be organized with good timing for all the students to participate. The timing of the orientation should be at a time that all admitted and registered students should be involved.

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