

USER EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE NIGERIA: TYPES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

User education means imparting the knowledge of library use to the users. It includes any effort or programme which will guide and instruct the existing and potential users, individually or collectively. The study looked into the types of user education programmes and the effectiveness of each type in achieving its objectives. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument for the collection of data. 50 professional librarians from 6 (six) tertiary institutions in Anambra State participated in the study. The data collected were analyzed by simple descriptive approach, using percentage, means, standard deviations and coefficient of deviations of 0.5 acceptance level. Many findings were made and the study concluded that formal instruction as a general studies course for freshmen is the most effective user education programme in tertiary institutions.

Background of the Study

Every student in the tertiary institution requires the use of library resources for his/her academic endeavour and for a life long education.

The phenomenal increase in the students enrolment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, coupled with knowledge explosion, shortage of learning materials has warranted that every institution of higher learning in Nigeria must provide good library services to the students in order to achieve its set objectives.

Primarily, the objective of an academic library is to implement, enrich and support the educational programmes of the parent-institution. • Other objectives include the development of reading skills and instruction in the use of books and libraries. This instruction in the use of books and libraries is a programme that teaches students/library users how to make maximum and effective use of the resources of the library. It is this instruction in the use of books and libraries that is often referred to as, "User Education." It encompasses all activities undertaken to help students/users of libraries to locate and evaluate their information needs

Ultimately, the goal of user education is to bring information seekers together with the information they need. Differences in instructional programmes and controversies among those who teach or organize the programmes, center on which skills and understandings that will foster attainment of that goal and how best to impart the skills (Biggs, 1993).

Generally, the user education includes the following inter-related areas:-

- (a) User awareness
- (b) Library Orientation
- (c) Librarians Talk/Guide tour of Library
- (d) Bibliographic Instruction
- (e) Use of library as G.S. course.
- (f) Library Brochures/Handbooks
- (g) Point-of-use instruction
- (h) Library Signposts/Guides
- (i) Self-Paste instruction
- (j) Interest Profiling (Selection Dissemination of Information)

Advent of information technology (IT) has opened new vista of user education.

The print media, non-print media, micro media, quantitative growth and quantitative complexity of the reading materials make literature search and use difficult for the user. The information retrieval systems and the latest modes of information technology transfer, all make user education imperative. Retrieval of information from various data bases located at far off places involves computers, telecommunication system and electronic devices. The optimal use of on-line information

retrieval system requires good training on the part of user/searcher. With the increase in the number of data bases available in various disciplines, the need for user training becomes obvious. This education need, not necessarily be turned to technical skills of computer hardware, but direct itself to the basic elements of utilization of the system.

Purpose of Study

This study focused on types of user education programmes and their effectiveness in achieving their objectives.

Statement of the Problem

Undergraduates in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria, take a mandatory library user education in their first year aimed at acquiring skills for effective and efficient use of the library resources. A keen observation of these students in the library by the author of this paper readily shows that many of the beneficiaries of the mandatory user education lack the appropriate skill and knowledge expected of them for effective library use. This creates problems for the students, the library staff and indeed the entire educational system. There is also poor attitude to the use of the card catalogue. Most students walk straight to the bookshelves to browse for information only to come out frustrated.

Some do not know the reference sources or literature to approach for their information needs. Others who have the knowledge of sources to approach often do not know how to sort out information from them. Above all, most students/library users have not acquired the skill necessary for effective and efficient utilization of library resources.

The above evidence buttresses the fact that user education in tertiary institutions is associated with myriad of problems. The present study is an attempt to go further by investigating the problems and proffer solutions to them.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

- (1) What are the types of user education programmes?
- (2) To what extent does the type of user education programmes meet the objectives of user education?
- (3) To what extent does the instructional method of user education affect the programmes?
- (4) What are the various methods that could be adopted to improve user education programmes in the tertiary institutions?

Methodology

Population

The population of the study consists of all the professional librarians in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Sample

The sample for the study consists of 50 (fifty), professional librarians selected from 6 (six) tertiary institutions that are very much involved in user education programmes.

Instrument

The questionnaire method was the main instrument used for data collection. The questions were drawn based on the research questions for the study. The drafts were given to authorities in the field of librarianship for vetting. As a result of their expert suggestions, the instrument was modified and then used. The questionnaire was constructed using four-point scale response items. All the distributed questionnaire to the 50 participants were duly completed and returned. The number of participants in each of the institutions is shown in table I overleaf. '-•

Table 1: Institutions and Number of Participating Librarians

Institution	Librarians	Faculty Librarians	Total	%
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	12	3	15	30
Federal Polytechnic, Oko	7	10	17	34
Federal College of Education, Umuozu	3	2	5	10
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe	5	3	8	16
Anambra State University, Uli	3	-	3	6
Madonna University, Okija	2	-	2	4

Data Analysis

The data collected were subsequently organized according to each research question and analyzed using simple descriptive approach namely — percentages, means, standard deviations, and co-efficient of deviations of 0.5 acceptance level.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: Types of user education programmes adopted in the institutions.

- From the result, the following user education programmes are listed.
- Orientation programme for freshmen
- Librarians Talk/Guided tour of the Library
- Use of Library as G.S. course
- Library Brochures/Handbooks
- Bibliographic Instruction
- Point-of use instruction
- Library Signposts/Guides
- Self-paste Instruction
- Library instruction as part of G.S. Course in the use of English or Research Method.

Research Question 2

Effectiveness of types of user education programmes.

Table 2: Mean (X) and Standard Deviation (Sd) of the Response on the Effectiveness Of Types of User Education Programme.

S/N	Items		SD	Decision
		X		
1.	Use of library instruction as a G.S. course with credit units.	3.0	0.61	Effective
2.	Orientation programme for freshmen at the beginning of the first semester.	3.1	0.52	Effective
3.	Bibliographic instruction in the first semester for freshmen.	3.0	0.61	Effective
4.	Point of use instruction by library staff.	2.04	0.37	Ineffective
5.	Librarians talk/auided tour of the library.	3.0	0.63	Effective

6.	Guides and signposts as means of library instruction	1.9	0.23	Ineffective
7.	Library instruction as part of G.S course in the use of English Language course	1.9	0.24	Ineffective
8.	Library Brochures and Handbook as sources of instruction on use of library.	2.4	0.32	Ineffective

N - 50

2.5 = Acceptance level of effectiveness for mean scores

X = Calculated mean score

SD = Standard Deviation.

It could be seen from the table 2 above, that respondents accepted items 1,2,3 and 5 as effective methods of teaching use of library course as the items mean scores (X) are above the 2.5 acceptance level as indicated below the table. The other items numbers 4,6,7 and 8 are regarded as ineffective methods of user education as their mean scores fail below the acceptance level of mean (X) score of 2.50

Research Question 3

Table 3: instructional Methods of User Education Programmes that Adversely Affect the Programmes-

S/N	Instructional Methods	(f)	%
1.	Teaching use of library as part of any other course.	40	80
2.	Teaching of use of library outside the library premises.	40	80
3.	Teaching of large number of freshmen in a group lecture	30	60
4.	Teaching use of library as only one semester course.	25	50

Data in table 3 above, show that 80% of the respondents agreed that teaching use of library as an integral part of any other course adversely affects the programme. The same 80% of respondents agreed that teaching of user education outside 'the library premises adversely affect the programme. 60% of respondents accept that teaching a very large number of freshmen in a group lecture adversely affect the user education programme, while 50% of the respondents pointed out that only one semester course for use of library instruction adversely affect the programme.

Research Question 4

Table 4: Methods of Improving User Education; Programmes in Tertiary Institutions.

S/N	Method of Improvement	X	SD	Decision
1.	Library skills are imparted to the students at a point when they experience the motivation to receive the instruction.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
2.	User education programme is characterized by a written profile identifying the audience for instruction and their needs, a written statement of instructional goals and objectives and a plan for the evaluation of the programme.	3.0	0.61	Accepted

3.	T3-.e programme should occasionally introduce literature search, give problem-solving assignments the library thereby getting users acquainted with library resources.	3.4	0.62	Accepted
4.	The programme should be a combination both personal teaching and audio-visual aids, each supplementing the other.	2.2	0.41	Rejected

N = 50
2.5 = Acceptance level for mean scores

X = Calculated mean score
SD = Standard Deviation,

Data in table 4 above, show that items 1,2 and 3 in the table indicate proper methods of improving user education programme in tertiary institutions, while item number 4 in the table is not a proper method of improving user education programme because the mean score fell below the accepted 2.50 mean score.

Discussion of Findings

From the data collected and analyzed, it was observed that 6 (six), tertiary institutions in Anambra State Nigeria were involved in the study. Out of the 6 institutions, 3 are Universities, one Polytechnic and 2 (two), Colleges of Education. It was also observed that 50 (fifty), Librarians participated in the study, out of the 50 (fifty), Librarians, 32 (thirty-two), were librarians working in the institution libraries, while 18 (eighteen), were faculty librarians or librarians teaching library science in the institutions.

In reaction to research question I, the data collected and analysed showed that 9 (nine), types of user education programmes were practised in the institutions.

Data contained in table 2 revealed that orientation programme for freshmen is an effective user education programme. Use of Library Instruction as a G.S. course with credit units proved to be very effective in achieving the objectives of user education programme.

Bibliographic instructions to students was seen as an effective type of user education in that students learn about materials resources in their fields of studies early enough inorder to meet with their academic demands. According to Ticfel (1989), bibliographic instruction produces significant improvement in students' knowledge about books, their ability to use libraries and their attitudes towards librarians.

Point-of-use instruction is not a very effective types of user education 'programme. This finding confirms the assertion of Kirkendall (1980), who advanced that point-of-use instruction, has strategic weaknesses. It appears to be a service like reference appropriate only for the desperate. It is impossible to be enclosed in a full instructional partnership, and such instruction has no institutional character, no sanction in any tradition other than that of the guest lecturer.

Library instruction as part of G.S Course in the Use of English Course is never an effective type of user education programme. Library skill is not acquired when use of library is taken as an integral part of another course.

Library Brochure and Handbooks cannot be recognized as an effective user-education programme. According to Stamatoplos and MacKoy (1998), exposure to a library does not necessarily improve library skill nor do students learn good library skills on their own effort. Some methods of formal instruction are very important.

Data in table 3 reveal that teaching of user education outside the library premises affect the user education programme. Classroom teaching does not allow the students to have practical knowledge of what they are being taught.

Large number of students in a group lecture affects the user education programme. Whenever the class is large in terms of number of students, some of the students loose interest in the lecture. Observation by the author has shown that the fewer the students, the more concentration of attention during lectures.

Only one semester use of library instruction is not enough to impart the required library skill. Lynch and Seibert (1980), pointed out that the leaching of library skills must show a progression throughout a student time in the school and must not be repetitive.

Data in table 4, show that a user can acquire library skills when they experience the motivation to receive the instruction. The user education programme must be presented at a time when the students need it and are required to use it.

For user education programme to be effective, it must be characterized by a written profile identifying the audience for the instruction and their needs, a written statement of instructional goals and objectives and a plan for the evaluation of the programme.

Literature search and problem solving assignments in the library helps to impart the required library skills to users. Adeyemi (2000), emphasized that one way of getting faculty involvement in user education programme is by introducing or giving literature search in research or problem solving assignments occasionally. Compulsory library assignment is a highly effective tool in teaching library skills.

Combination of both personal teaching and audio-visual aids, each supplementing the other is not very necessary. Only personal teaching imparts the required library skills.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the problems of user education in the tertiary institutions are in the methods of imparting the knowledge and some of the institutional policies.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are made:-

- (i) The library orientation programme should be organized when the freshmen have fully settled down for academic work and should be conducted within the library and not in the classroom or lecture halls,
- (ii) The number of students for any formal lecture must be sizeable enough for effective instruction.
- (iii) User education programmes in the tertiary institutions should be made to run for at least two full academic semesters so as to effectively cover the course outline,
- (iv) Library instruction should be followed with practical exercise to acquaint user with library resources.
- (v) Literature search and problem-solving assignments should be occasionally introduced in the programme,
- (vi) Evaluation of student's performance in the programme should be by written examination at the end of the course/semester.

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