Challenges and Strategies of User Education Programmes for the Utilisation of Electronic Resources by Undergraduate Students in Universities in Benue State

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Abstract

The study focused on the challenges of running user education programme by academic librarians in universities in Benue state was aimed at assessing the factors that militate against the effective running of the programme in the universities. Two (2) objectives guided the study. The objectives are to find out the challenges of running a user education programme by academic librarians in universities in Benue State as well as the strategies employed to overcome the mitigating factors. The study adopted a survey research design. The study was carried out in Benue State. The population of the study was 3522. The sample for this study was 359 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "User Education Programme Assessment Questionnaire (UEPAQ)" developed by the researcher from the literature reviewed. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The study found that academic librarians faced seventeen (17) challenges in running user education programmes in Universities in Benue State. Analysis of data from the study further showed that eleven (11) strategies could be adopted to mitigate the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programmes in Universities in Benue State. Recommendations Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made, Adequate funding should be provided to enable user educators (academic librarians) acquire the necessary equipment for teaching user education. Academic librarians should adopt the identified strategies for mitigating the challenges faced in running user education programmes in order to ensure the smooth running of the programme in universities.

Keywords: Academic Librarians, User Education Programme, University Libraries

Introduction

The American Library Association (1989, p. 2) defines user education as encompassing all types of activities designed to teach users about library services, facilities and organisation, library resources, and search strategies. A survey of the literature reveals the importance of user education in academic libraries. It is believed that improving user's skills in exploiting library resources and services can lead to greater use of the library. According to Behrens (1993), library skills include using the catalogue and other bibliographic tools, selecting information from these resources, and physically locating them on the shelves. The Gericke (1996), sees user education

as teaching the use of libraries and information sources. It includes instruction in the use of one or more reference sources as a part of reference transactions, library use presentations, and bibliographic instruction. Mews (1992) describes a process of broad and continuous user education that is an integral part of student learning. The question on, why user education becomes necessary at this point? Academic libraries recognise that students need to be able to obtain, use, and apply information to be successful in their academic pursuit. An organisation that offers goods or services for sale recognises the importance of making the customer aware of opportunities for spending money. Similarly, an academic library should make its users aware of the resources and services that are offered, where to find them, and how to exploit what is available. The lack of utilisation of the library resources has necessitated the introduction of enhanced user education in the university libraries for the following reasons:

• Emphasis on interdisciplinary research;
• The system of examination on semester bases, with emphasis on assignments, self-study, and the like.
• Increases in the amount of available literature;
• The absence of good libraries at the elementary and secondary school levels in the country's educational system
• Gradual introduction of computers in library processes.

Libraries in educational institutions provide relevant information resources for teaching, learning, and research. The university libraries in Benue State faces challenges in providing adequate resources and efficient services to its clientele, and the provided resources are hardly utilised as the library patronage is low. There has also been a phenomenal growth in student numbers over the past decade. The impact on library resources should have included overuse of library books and journals and the consequent deterioration of the collection. Which none have been recorded, the management of the library increased its strategy on the processes of user education in the universities around the state which more attention was given to library orientation to determine its effectiveness on users patronage. The major problem facing the library is how to organise user education more effectively given the rise in student numbers, the limited number of professional staff and the advent of electronic resources which has changed the information provision pattern. This study examines the effect of user education programmes on the utilisation of electronic resources as well as the increased number of students admitted. The study can be compared to the record on the statistics of patrons as well as the constraints facing the university libraries in Benue state, in its attempt to provide adequate user education, especially in this era of increased student numbers.

Problem Statement

Universities in Nigeria adopt various ways of equipping educating their users with skills and knowledge of library use resource. The purpose is to assist their patrons to become better users of the library resource. Unfortunately, many students in universities in Nigeria are generally believed to exhibit low use of library resource despite the user education programs in Nigerian universities. This situation is worrisome because the library user education programme

has been emphasised taught as regular courses in these universities. This study has been prompted by an observation of the researcher that despite the various orientation programmes designed to enhance the use of library resources and services in universities for students,the effective utilisation of the library resources and services has not been realised in the study area. One, therefore, wonders if this failure is due to inadequate library resources and services, incompetence of trainers (academic librarians or low awareness on the benefits of the programme, among others. Because of this observation of student's ineffectiveness and incompetence in-library use, there is, therefore, the need to find out the challenges of the user education programme for effective utilisation of library resources in universities in Benue State.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to find out the effectiveness of user education programmes for utilisation of library resources in universities in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user Education Programme in Universities in Benue state.
2. Identify strategies that could be adopted for mitigating the challenges faced by academic librarians in running User Education Programme in Universities in Benue state.

Literature Review

According to Ogunmdede and Emeahara (2010), One of the fundamental laws of the library is that the resources-books and non-book must be well consulted. The librarian has to acquire and provide access to the information stocked in the libraries. The user is critical in the practice of librarianship; this is because the library process revolves around the users. No matter how large the stock of a library is if the services and its resources are not fully utilised, such a library will end up empty. (Aina, 2004) With the advent of Information Technology (IT), which has permeated almost all the activities of libraries, it is crucial to explain the working of a library to a new user in detail. The ultimate objective is to enable users to exploit the resources of a library to the fullest. Fjallbrant (1990) defines the concept thus: " The teaching of those skills that will enable students to locate and use materials effectively, and feel confident in using the library. Also, it aims to acquaint users with the use of materials in the libraries. Similarly, Fleming (1990) defined library use education "as the various programmes of instruction, education and exploration provided by libraries to enable users to make effective, efficient and independent use of information sources and services to which these libraries provide access"'. Bello (2003), as cited in Fjallbrant, that library user education is a device by the librarians to educate users on how to use the resources available in the library in a result-oriented way.

Challenges Faced by Academic Librarians in Running User Education Programmes

According to Idowu (2008), the major challenge facing library is how to organise user education more effectively given the rise in the student the limited number of professional staff and the advent of electronic resources which, changed the information landscape, in Nigeria.

Findings from previous studies have revealed that user education enhances library use even though the programme is faced with many problems which include lack of inadequate fund, and inappropriate provision for the user education course on the time table. Others are inadequate library staff to cope with the amount of work evolved, that though the staff involved in the programme have sound knowledge of the subject matter and can impart knowledge the number is inadequate (Nwabueze, Dzioko & Igwesi, 2013). The implication of the inadequacy, according to the authors, is that they had to attend to a larger number of students which retards learning.

In the submission of Joseph (as cited in Akhalumhe, 2009) the following are problems faced by librarians in implementation of user education programme in some Nigerian academic libraries;

i. Over-dependence on one-day orientation programme.
ii. Lack of effective curriculum for user education in Nigerian tertiary institutions
iii. Lack of examinable library instruction
iv. Over concentration (on the part of Librarian) on library technical services like acquisition, 'cataloguing and classification and shelving of books rather than information retrieval mechanism.
v. The use of unqualified personnel to *teach the use of the library* in some institutions, low (2008) argues that main areas affecting the programmed that need to be reappraised are; Timing of the programmed delivery, Quality of course delivery, Funding of the programmed.
vi. Lack of continuity and follow-up.

Similarly, Okoye (2013) identified a lack of stated objectives, non-cooperation from faculty teaching staff as a challenge to user education.

Strategies that could be Adopted to Overcome the Challenges Faced by Academic Librarians in Running User Education Programme

The success of any user education program depends to a large extent upon the method adopted to teach it. Every library has its method as suitable for the objective and policies of such library depending on the type of clientele, age, education, location and order. The method to be adopted in any user education programme should take into consideration the unique peculiarities of their patrons, and it is advisable to adopt a method that is simple and less expensive. Teaching user education according to Uhegbu (2007) can be done under two approaches;

1. Lecture method
2. Demonstration

Lecture Method: is a process whereby someone comes in with a series of prepared instruction which he delivers to users. The lecturer can be delivered by a practising librarian or formation scientist or information professional that has the experience and knows the fundamental of users' sociology and psychology and should align with the purpose of user education. The strength of the lecture as a means of teaching user education is that it allows for a question and answer session between the lecturer and the users. Its demerit lies in its total theoretical base, which

gives the user rather vague ideas that he may not understand the use at the end of the whole exercise. It might also involve many users at this moment, making a practical evaluation of users and teaching method impossible (Uhegbu, 2107).

Demonstration: Demonstration, according to Uhegbu (2007), is a suitable method of implementing user education as it involves practical. According to the author, it brings the user and information retrieval tools into close contact, thereby eliminating the imagination of users. The demonstration is more practical in approach than the lecture approach and can be done in two ways-taking the users around the library and introducing them to the retrieval tools. The demonstration can be done by the use of audio-visuals, tapes, slides, films and videos. Users are shown films on how to do a literature search, and slides are used to show how *catalogues are prepared, videotapes or films show the arrangement or* classification of information materials. All these make it possible for the user to be more effective in the use of library resources. The demerit is that it can be time and labour intensive.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Benue State. Benue state was created among the 36 states in Nigeria, is suitable for this study because it has State and Federal University Libraries with Modern Library resources and facilities that can be used to train fresh students to enhance their library use skills. The study adopted a survey research design. Survey research design is one in which a group of people or item is studied by collecting and analysing data from a few people or item considered to be representative of the entire population. The population of the study is 3522, which comprises 1992 registered library users of the University Library; the sample for this study was 359 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "User Education Programme Assessment Questionnaire (UEPAQ)" developed by the researcher from the literature reviewed. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Challenges faced by the academic librarians in running user education programmes in universities in Benue state were collected and analysed using mean and standard deviation as presented in the table below using Mean Ratings of Standard Deviation (N = 28: n_1 = 17 users in State University; n_1= 11 User in Federal Universities).

Table 1: Challenges faced by academic librarians

S/N	Challenges of Running User Education Programme	$\overline{X}_1$	SD_1	$\overline{X}_2$	SD_2	$\overline{X}g$	SD G	Remark
30	Minimal time is allocated to the	2.71	.77	2.91	.83	2.93	.79	Agreed

	programme							
1	The time allocated on time tables does not permit practical	2.76	.83	2.82	.98	2.79	.88	Agreed
2	Time allocated to the programme is not conducive as a student are yet to settle down	3.00	.86	3.18	.98	3.07	.90	Agreed
3	Time allocated is inadequate for follow-up instructions	2.88	.99	3.00	1.18	2.93	1.05	Agreed
4	Inadequate time as a result of staff involvement in library routines	3.00	.93	2.82	.87	2.93	.90	Agreed
5	Freshers lack background knowledge of library use due to non-introduction of library usage from primary school.	3.00	.61	2.82	.60	2.93	.60	Agreed
6	Inadequate finance	3.12	.93	3.00	1.09	3.07	.98	Agreed
7	Library allocated does not cater to the programme	2.53	1.18	2.82	1.25	2.64	1.19	Agreed
8	There is a shortage does not cater for the programme.	3.59	.79	3.55	.93	3.57	.83	Agreed
9	There are inadequate ICT facilities for running the programme.	2.94	.83	3.09	.70	3.00	.77	Agreed
10	Size of the library in the institution is too small to contain large numbers of trainees (fresh students)	3.41	.94	3.09	1.04	3.29	.98	Agreed
11	Insufficient number of librarians/library personnel to implement the programme	3.65	49	3.64	.50	3.64	.49	Agreed

		X_1	SD_1	X_2	SD_2	X_g	SDG	
12	Most librarians are not knowledgeable in the use of modern ICT facilities	3.76	.75	3.73	.46	3.75	.64	Agreed
13	Lack of proper grounding from school leads to a deficiency at tertiary advances levels	2.24	.43	1.91	.70	2.11	.57	Agreed
14	Over-dependency on one-day orientation programme	3.71	.59	3.45	.52	3.61	.56	Agreed
15	Lack of effective curriculum for user education in Nigeria tertiary institutions	3.29	.77	3.55	.52	3.39	.68	Agreed
16	Inadequacy of examinable library instructions	3.35	.70	3.55	.69	3.43	.69	Agreed
17	The use of unqualified personnel to teach users how to make appropriate use of the library	3.41	.71	3.73	.47	3.54	.64	Agreed
18	Flawed evaluation method of user education programmes.	1.88	.93	2.09	.94	1.96	.92	Disagreed
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	**3.06**	**.791**	**3.09**	**.80**	**3.07**	**.79**	

N = number of respondents, X_1 = mean of academic librarian in-state university, SD_1 = standard deviation of academic librarians in-state university, X_2 = mean of academic librarians in federal university, SD_2 = standard deviation of academic librarians in federal university, X_g = grand mean of respondents SDG = grand Standard deviation of respondents.

Data in Table 1 showed that 17 out of 19 items on challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programme in universities in Benue state had their grand means ranged from 2.64 to 3.75, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50. This showed that respondents agreed the 17 items as the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programme in universities in Benue state. The challenges discovered include: minimal time is allocated to the programme, time allocated on time table does not permit practical, time allocated to the programme is not conducive as a student are yet to settle down, time allocated is inadequate for follow-up instructions, inadequate of time as a result of staff involvement in library routines, fresher's lack background knowledge

of library use due to non- the introduction of library usage from primary school. Inadequate finance, library allocation does not cater for the programme, there is a shortage of information resources for the programme, there are inadequate ICT facilities for running the programme, size of the library in the institution is too small to contain large numbers of trainees (fresh students), insufficient number of librarians/library personnel. Most librarians are not knowledgeable in the use of modern ICT facilities, over-dependency on one-day orientation programme, lack of effective curriculum for user education in Nigeria tertiary institutions, the inadequacy of examinable library instruction and the use of unqualified personnel to teach users how to make appropriate use of the library. The finding is in line with the finding of Okoye (2013) who found that lack of user education policy, stated objectives of the library user education were not available, and lack of cooperation from faculty teaching staff. Others are an inadequate number of professional library teaching staff to conduct user education, minimal time is allocated to the programme, library user education is not made compulsory in some institution, and there is lack of fund to support the programme. Findings also showed that librarians are not knowledgeable in modern ICT literacy, among others are the significant challenges to the full implementation of user education by librarians in federal cities universities in Nigeria.

Analysed data on strategies that could be adopted for mitigating the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programme in universities in Benue State was collected and subjected to analysis using mean and standard (N= 28: n_1 = 17 **Academic Librarians in State University**; n_2 = 11 Academic Librarians in Federal University)as presented in below

Table 2: Strategies that could be adopted for mitigating the challenges

S/N	Strategies	$\overline{X}_1$	SD_1	$\overline{X}_2$	SD_2	$\overline{X}g$	SDg	Remark
19	Training for the old staff of the library with modern facilities	3.41	.87	3.64	.67	3.50	.79	Agreed
20	More qualified professionals (librarians) should be recruited	3.35	.93	3.55	.52	3.43	.79	Agreed
21	More time should be allotted to the user education programme	3.35	.93	3.64	.50	3.46	.79	Agreed
22	Timely awareness creation for the programme of user education	3.47	1.01	3.55	.52	3.50	.84	Agreed
23	Orientation should be conducted a programme	3.24	1.03	3.55	.69	3.36	.91	Agreed

of user education

No	Item	X	SD1	X2	SD2	Xg	SDg	Decision
24	Practical training of students on the use of necessary library facilities right from element school level.	3.29	1.05	3.64	.67	3.43	.92	Agreed
25	More time should be allocated for teaching the use of the library in the university	3.35	1.06	3.55	.52	3.43	.88	Agreed
26	Adequate accessibility should be given to students to enable them to consult references resource	3.24	1.09	3.55	.52	3.36	.91	Agreed
27	Control accessibility should be provided in case of library resources that are available in the library	3.24	1.15	3.55	.69	3.36	.99	Agreed
28	Adequate financial resources should be provided for the programme	2.12	.78	1.73	.78	1.96	.79	Agreed
29	Stimulating students interest to imbibe library culture at the early stage of their education.	3.35	1.05	3.82	.40	3.54	.88	Agreed
30	The university administration should consider users education as critical criteria	3.41	1.17	3.55	.52	3.46	.96	Agreed
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	**3.23**	**1.01**	**3.44**	**.58**	**3.31**	**.79**	

N = number of respondents, X = mean of academic librarians in-state university, SD1 = standard deviation of academic librarians in-state university, X2 = mean of academic librarians in federal university, SD_2 = standard deviation of academic librarians in federal university, X_g= grand mean respondents SD_g = grand Standard deviation of respondents.

The results obtained from analysis of data on objective 2 in Table 2 showed that eleven (11) strategies could be adopted to mitigate the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programmes in Universities in Benue State. The strategies were training for old staff of the library should acquaint them with modern facilities, more Qualified professionals (librarians) should be recruited, more time should be allotted to the user education programme, timely awareness creation for the programme of user education, orientation should be conducted when students have settle down, practical training of students on the use of necessary library facilities right from elementary school level, more time should be provided for teaching of use of library in the university, adequate accessibility should be given to students to enable them consult reference resource, adequate financial resource should be provided for the programme, stimulating students interest to imbibe library culture at the early stage of their education and the university administration should consider user education programmes as an essential criteria in professional advancement of students and make adequate provisions (human , material; and financial) to support the programme.

Conclusion

The study has successfully assessed the challenges of running a user education programme for the training of students the effective utilisation of library resources in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. (17) Challenges were faced by academic librarians and (11) strategies could be adopted to mitigate the challenges faced by academic librarians in running user education programmes in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. This suggests that if the strategies identified by this study are adopted, it could lead to the efficient running of user education programmes by librarians which could help the student to utilise library resources and services for maximum academic achievement effectively.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made, base on the findings:
1. Adequate fund should be provided to enable user educators (academic librarians) acquire the necessary equipment for teaching user education.
2. Academic librarians should adopt the identified strategies for mitigating the challenges faced in running user education programmes for the smooth running of the programme in universities

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