

INFLUENCE OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION COURSE ON STUDENTS' ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES IN ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY, BAUCHI, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of Library Instruction course (GNS 201: Library and Information Science) on the students ability to use the ATBU university library effectively to access their information needs. The population of the research was students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. Simple random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 300 students. The research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The result of the research indicated that, 73 or 26.45% were able to use catalogues to access library materials. This means that, about, 76.08% or 210 of the respondents attached considerable importance to the GNS 201 course offered by the university. In the light of the findings, it is recommended that the university administration should review the syllabus of the GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course. The review is intended to reflect the current changes in library operations (application of ICT facilities in library operations). This will offer the students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with innovations and current applications of technology to library activities.

Keywords: Library Instruction, Students, Access, Utilization of Library Resources

INTRODUCTION

Knowing the importance of library (academic library) to students, the university administration made it compulsory on students to study course on library science, entitled: GNS 201 (Library and Information Science). This is in line with the National University Commission (NUC) directive that the Nigerian Universities should imbed in their curriculum the library and information science course. The reasons might not be divorced from the current technological development in the field of information storage, retrieval and dissemination. Ottong and Ntui (2010). The syllabus of this course was designed in such a way that the students would be able to acquire the skills needed by the library users to utilize the library resources optimally. It is the objective of library instruction course entitled: GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) to prepare students to possess information skills needed by library users to explore library resources. The university libraries are facing the challenges posed by information explosion as a result of the growth of published materials in all fields of human endeavour. This phenomenon has mandated the libraries to acquire every bit of information materials and organize them for users to access. One of the ways of stimulating the active use of books and other materials stored in university libraries is

by teaching the library users especially undergraduate and graduate students how to obtain information from available resources (Edem and Lawal, 1996). It is important to note that, the changes brought by the use of ICT facilities in storing, retrieving and dissemination of information by libraries posed challenges to students on the needs to be informed on how well, to utilize and access information. The applications of Information Technology into library system demand from the students, (library users) an exposure to ICT facilities and to be taught on how to operate them in retrieving information. Quari (1999) stresses the need for library users (students, university staff, etc) to acquire the IT skills for effective information retrieval. Information Communication Technology facilities are new innovation found and utilized by many libraries to achieve efficiencies in information dissemination. According to Ani and Ottong (2010), through integration of information technology principally computers and the internet in the libraries; access to and utilization of electronic information for quality teaching and learning is now a common practice in Nigerian universities. The influence of ICT facilities in library activities expand the demand of library users to be trained or thought on how to use them to retrieve their information needs.

The Library and Information Science course is a component of the curriculum of university for the purpose of exposing students of Nigerian universities to the activities taking place in the library and to enable students exploits library collection using the necessary skills. The main purpose of any academic library is to enable the students to have access to its collections, independent of library staff intervention. Based on this reason therefore, the university administration made it mandatory for undergraduate students to attend and pass the GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course before graduating. In this course, the students are made to understand the principles guiding the selection and acquisition of library materials, how the library materials are acquired, the way they were organized and the functions of library indexes (such as card catalogues, etc) in accessing information from library holdings. This is helpful enough to make the students acquire necessary information skills required from them to be competent library users. It is sad to note that, the performance of students during GNS 201 course examination is not encouraging in ATBU, Bauchi due to some factors. Such factors include lack of seriousness accorded to the course studied by the students, overcrowding of students in a lecture hall, and so on. Upon all these odds, this study focuses on the effect of library instruction course (GNS 201) which equipped students with knowledge on how to utilize library resources to get information materials for the satisfaction of their information needs.

The main objective of this research is to find out the effect of GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course on students abilities to explore library resources for their information needs. The following are the specific objectives:

1. To find out whether the students attached any importance to the GNS 201 course or not through their attendance during the lectures;
2. To examine the impact of GNS 201 course on students ability to use the library,

3. To assess the level of utilizing the library by the students;
4. To identify problems if any that the students encountered in applying the knowledge acquired in GNS 201 course to access information from the library; and
5. To proffer solutions to the problems faced by students in accessing information from library resources.

This research is purposely designed to answer the following questions:

1. What importance do the students attach to GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course?
2. What is the impact of GNS 201 course on students' ability to access information from the library?
3. What is the level of utilization of library resources by students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi?
4. What problems do the students encounter in applying their knowledge of Library and Information Science in using library?
5. What are the solutions to these problems?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used to investigate the effect of library instruction course (GNS 201: Library and Information Science) course on students' access and utilization of library resources in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. The population of this study consisted of all the students studying GNS 201 course in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 300 students. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, 276 copies were collected and analysed. The data collected for the study were analysed using frequency and simple percentage. The results presented on tabulated format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Level of Importance Attached to GNS 201 by Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very important	68	24.63
Important	142	51.45
Not important	66	23.91
Total	276	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 2: Impact of GNS 201 course on students' access to information

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
It enables me to use library catalogues for the access to library holdings properly	73	26.45
It enables to know the procedures involved in borrowing library materials	49	17.75
It helps me to know how to make reference inquiries	56	20.29
It makes me to know how to explore library materials for my research	61	22.10
It helps me to appreciate the need to be a library user	23	8.33
Others	14	5.07
Total	276	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 3: The Level of Utilization of library resources by students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Highly Utilized	72	26.09
Moderately Utilized	118	42.75
Not Utilized	86	31.16
Total	276	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 4: Problems encountered by students while applying the knowledge acquired to retrieve information from the library

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Poor shelving of books on the shelves	93	33.70
Poor filling of card catalogues in the cabinets	58	21.01
Poor attitude of some library staff in dealing with library users	32	29.71
Lack of enough time to visit the library	43	15.58

Source: Survey, 2011

The table 1 indicates that 24.63% of the respondents attached greater importance to the GNS 201 course as a source of information to them on how to use the library and its resources. About 51.45% felt that GNS course is important to them, while 23.91% relegate its importance to the background. Table 2 answered the research question 2 on the impact of GNS 201 course on students access to information 26.45% of the respondents believed that as a result of the knowledge acquired from GNS course they were able to use library card catalogues effectively to access the library materials, while 17.75% of the respondents pointed that, they were able to know how to borrow the library materials after acquiring knowledge on how to use the library. 20.29% of the respondents make reference in enquiry in the library.

Out of the total number of the respondents, 22.10% were able to access library holdings independently. 8.33% and 5.07% of the total respondents emphasized the contribution of GNS to their appreciation to be users of library and the services

(such as reference, circulation, and other services) rendered by the library respectively. The table 3 indicates that 26.09% of the respondents utilized the library maximally to obtain their information needs. About 42.75% used the library resources, while 31.16% of the respondents were found not to be using the library at all. This could not be divorced from the fact that, these respondents were not seemed to attach any importance to the course. Table 4 shows that 33.70% of the respondents expressed their inability to access the relevant document/s from the library as a result of poor shelving of books on the shelves. 21.01% felt that the card catalogues in the cabinet were either removed or wrongly filed by the library staff or the students. Only 29.71% of the respondents believed that some library staff were ready to assist them when they need the assistance from them, while 15.58% claimed that they have limited time to visit library.

Oduwale, Onifade and Akintola (2004) reported that libraries are essentially educational institutions by their nature, therefore are regarded as the heart of any institution of learning. In any academic community the libraries provide resources to aid the curriculum, teaching, learning and research. Affia (1983) points out that students in early period of their university education are often ignorant or unable to appreciate the value of the library. This statement seems to be in conflict with the objective of establishing library by tertiary institutions. The establishment of library in any academic environment was done for the purpose of providing information resources to meet the highly demand of information requirements of the members of the academic environment. For this reason, the GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course in any tertiary institution of learning in Nigeria is regarded as important by both the administration and the individual library user for its contribution towards equipping the students with desired knowledge of how to access information from the library.

Ottong and Ntui (2010) pointed that, the essence of GNS programme is to enable undergraduate acquire the skills to use the library and become competent for their lifelong education. The findings of this research reveal that three quarter of the respondents believed that GNS 201 course have assisted them to acquire the knowledge of how to use the library effectively. This involves proper utilization of library indexes such as card catalogues, online catalogues, which according to Komolafe-Opadeji (2010), the undergraduate students in life science discipline were found to engaged more in information seeking activities as a result of acquiring knowledge on library activities. Popoola and Zaid (2007) have reiterated that information availability does not mean accessibility but rather good user education programme must be harnessed to help library users in locating, retrieving having access to and using the resources in the library. The impact of the user education was also stressed by Mallaiah, Kumbar and Patil (2008) where they pointed that users are becoming aware of what is available in the library and also suggest what is available outside the library pertaining to his field of study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The finding of the research revealed that, about 76.08% of the respondents attached a considerable level of importance to GNS 201 been the source of acquiring information on how to use library and its resources. The impact of the knowledge of information on library and information science on students is more noticeable on their ability to retrieve information from the library with little or no assistance from the staff of the library. 26.45% of the respondents believed that, as a result of the information acquired from GNS course they were able to use library card catalogues effectively to access the library materials. Other activities involved in the process of accessing and utilization of information resources by the respondents were effectively accomplished as a result of acquiring relevant information on how to use library. As indicated above, many problems were faced by the respondents in their bit to access information from the library; one of such problems as expressed by the respondents is poor shelving of books on the shelves which is represented by 33.70% of the responses.

Based on the findings of this research above, the following recommendations are made to both university administration and the library department to work harmoniously for the realization of the objective of the library. Such recommendations are as follows:

1. The university administration should review the syllabus of the GNS 201 (Library and Information Science) course to reflect the current changes in library operations (application of ICT facilities in library operations). That is to intimate them with new innovations in library activities,
2. The library should complement the effort of the university administration by organizing user education programmes or orientation to give a firsthand information to students on the activities of the library,
3. The library should create a conducive environment for harmonious relationship between the staff and library users. This would encourage students to exploit library resources freely when the need arises,
4. A well qualified lecturers with different methods of imparting knowledge should be used to teach the GNS 201 course so that at the end, the students would develop interest in library and acquire the skills needed to use the library effectively,
5. The students should be made to understand that, GNS 201 course (Library and Information Science) is as important as their core courses. This means it is requirement for graduation.

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