

Integrating Electronic Information Resources in Polytechnic Libraries as Instrument of National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the importance of electronic information resources in tertiary education as instrument of national development in a developing country like Nigeria. It centres on the need to equip the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe academic library with information resources/sources that meet the educational and research needs of the potential workforce needed for national development. A census comprising 270 HND final year students from electrical and electronic, mechanical and computer engineering departments from the Delta State Polytechnic Otefe, Oghara, Nigeria are used for the study. Questionnaire is used as instrument of data collection. Two hundred and seventy copies of questionnaire were administered on the entire population. Only 243 copies of completed questionnaire were filled and returned. Data obtained are analysed using frequency count and percentage. The study reveals that the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Library is not appropriately equipped as an instrument of national development to provide needed educational and research support to HND final year students for them to contribute meaningfully to the growth of the nation. It is recommended among others that the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Library should upgrade her collections by providing other information resources/sources such as print abstracts and indexes, newspapers/magazines, seminars/conference papers, technical/scientific reports, online databases, online abstracts and indexes, electronic journals, electronic books, discussion groups, photographs and other visual sources and news group for enhanced research which gingers economic development.

Keywords: *Information resources/sources; national development; academic library; Delta State Polytechnics*

INTRODUCTION

The major objective of establishing tertiary institutions is to train and produce manpower and workforce to man local industries through teaching and research for national development. Tertiary education is considered a medium through which a nation develops research capacity and also generates skills needed for a functional economy and addressing complex national issues such as

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underdevelopment, unemployment, inflation, and much more (Mutula, 2011). An educated nation is invariably a developed nation (Igbuzor, 2006). According to Okiy (n.d.) education is an instrument par excellence for national development. The foundation of national development is the development of individuals in the social, political, economic, emotional, linguistic and cultural fields (Johnson, 2014); these are achieved through the use of a country's human, natural and institutional resources (Mohammed, 1996).

Academic libraries are libraries found in tertiary institutions whose function is to make available and accessible information resources to support academic and research activities. Adigun, Zakari and Andrew (2010) affirm that an academic library occupies a central position in tertiary institutions in the world and generically conveys its integral role in supporting higher education's core mission of teaching, research and education. According to Ingutia-Oyieke and Archie (2010) the major obligation of a tertiary institutions library is to provide relevant information resources to meet the information needs of all members of the institution. The academic library is the focal point of academic and research activities in a tertiary institution. Studies have shown that an institution is as good as her academic library (Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo and Okolle-Obura, 2013; Thanuskudi, 2011). Chigbu and Uzoagbo (2011) point out that librarians and libraries play important roles in the management of knowledge as vital asset which is relevant both to education and national building and they play active roles in drawing of national development plans in most nations.

Similarly, Ugboma and Edewor (2012) assert that the academic health, intellectual strength and success of educational institutions in producing high quality graduates into the labour market depend largely on the quality of information resources available in their libraries. To this end the academic library is faced with the onerous responsibility of selecting, making available and accessible the right quality and quantity of information resources easily and timely for her patrons. This role becomes particularly indispensable in the present era of information explosion and digital environment. To be able to participate effectively in the global 'information society' engendered by information communication technology (ICT), most libraries especially in developed countries with the support of their parent bodies have moved with the trend by providing information resources in electronic format, known as electronic information resources (Islam, 2013; Emery and Stone, 2013).

Bozimo (2007) is of the view that the slow rate of electronic information resources adoption and provision in Nigerian tertiary institutions is the reason we experience scarcity of current and up-to-date information for research and academic activities. Moreover, studies have shown that digital libraries have proved to be more effective in information and information services provision than traditional manual libraries (Kibbee, n.d.; Ahiaoma, Chimezie and Oluchi, 2013).

Education is made possible by the availability and use of relevant information that bring about positive transformation in people. Information is vital for there to be a feasible national development; hence, a wide variety and teeming supply of information resources are required to encourage independent study (Ogunsola, 2011) so that students and researchers can develop the ability to engage in active mental activities thereby being able to perform service for their personal wellbeing and the society in general. Ogbebor (2011) finds out that academic libraries have been identified as a key element for open access to information, which is vital to educational development. He adds that academic libraries collections and services are also intended for people who cannot afford to acquire variety and wide ranging collections for themselves; who need information resources that are practically difficult for a single individual to have, or who require experts assistance in information access, retrieval and otherwise.

Nyangoni (2012) avers that library service is one of the most effective avenues of acquiring, organizing and making available on democratic basis informational and educational materials. This service is even made more important in the tertiary education that is capital intensive. The academic library therefore remains the only place where members of a tertiary institution can have unlimited access to information resources needed for their academic work and research. In performing the role of information provider, the academic library becomes the most important instrument that enables tertiary institutions to achieve her mission of producing skilled personnel to man local industries.

Being a developing country, it is therefore required that tertiary institutions (polytechnics, colleges of education and universities) in Nigeria be provided with the right form of information resources in order to bring about meaningful and all round national development in the country. The Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe was established with the primary purpose of producing ND and HND holders in technology and engineering related disciplines that will help develop and foster technology development in Delta State and the larger Nigerian society. The duty of the Polytechnic library in this regard is to provide needed information to support the academic and research activities of the polytechnic. The challenge now is that; is the Delta State Polytechnic library, Otefe equipped and positioned to support the nurturing, and development of individuals for national development? This study is therefore set to find out if the polytechnic library stocks and make available current, up-to-date state of the art information resources and sources in contemporary issues for students to acquire knowledge to develop and acquire skills needed to contribute to the development of our society.

This study will provide empirical evidence on the level of support students and HND students in particular get from the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe library in regards to the provision of relevant information resources and sources for the acquisition of lifelong skills. The study will attempt to assess the quality of information resources available at the library for study and research work and

find out from the point of view of HND engineering students if the available resources adequately support them in their education and research work. The study outcome will be of value to the management of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe as it will reveal the areas the Polytechnic has failed in her responsibility of providing the needed support in the educational and intellectual developments of her students. The study outcome will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on academic libraries' function as instruments of nation building.

The study therefore seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What type of information resources and sources are HND students exposed to at the Delta State Polytechnic library, Otefe that will help them development and acquire skills required to contribute meaningfully towards nation building?
2. What is the level of support the HND final year students get from Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe library to prepare them to contribute effectively in the development of the nation?
3. What is the view of HND students of the support provided by the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe library in terms of relevance and adequacy of information resources/sources accessed at the polytechnic library, Otefe?

METHOD

The study is a descriptive survey. The study is a quality and quantity assessment aimed at finding out if students have access to current, up-to-date and state of the art information resources required in their research and academic work to help them acquire skills needed to contribute to the development of the country. The study was made up of a total population of 270 final year HND students from the school of engineering who are major in electronic and electrical (130), mechanical (80) and computer engineering (60). These groups of Students were purposefully selected for this study because their discipline is basically ICT inclined; moreover, they are being prepared to go into the labour market. A total of 270 copies of questionnaire were administered to the final year HND engineering students, out of which 243 (90%) copies were returned and found useable for the study. Electronic and electrical (elect/elect.) (118), mechanical (mech.) (72) and computer engineering (comp.) (53). A census of the population was taken for the study as the population is small. Moreover, data collected through census gives more accurate and reliable data than other sampling surveys (Bhanu, 2011). Data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the response rate from each department. Table 2 shows that the information resources/sources HND students are exposed to in the polytechnic library are mainly print books and project works. All respondents (100%) from

the three departments confirm the availability and access of print books and project works. Print journals and manuscripts and other sources of documents are also attested to be available and accessed by a small fraction of the respondents from elect/elect. (12.2 and 9.3%) and mech. (12.5 and 4.2%). Other information resources/sources listed such as print abstracts and indexes, newspapers/magazines, seminars/conference papers, technical/scientific reports, online databases, online abstracts and indexes, electronic journals, electronic books, discussion groups, photographs and other visual sources and news group scored 0% as they are confirmed to be unavailable at the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Library.

Respondents were requested to indicate from the list provided the types of information resources/sources that support their study and research work. Table 3 presents the responses to this question. The result shows that all respondents (100%) listed print books and project works as the resources that they collect information from for knowledge acquisition for their study and research. Print journals and manuscripts and other sources of documents are used less with 12.2% and 9.3%; 12.5 and 4.2%; 5.7% and 0% cores for elect/elect, mech. and comp. engr. respectively. All other listed resources/sources scored 0%, indicating that they are obviously not available in the polytechnic library.

The data presented in table 4 shows respondents responses to how relevant and adequate information resources/sources available in the Delta State Polytechnic Otefe Library are to respondents fields of study. The result shows that of all the information resources/sources listed, only print books and project works are listed as relevant and adequate. 49.2% (elect/elect.); 51.4% (mech.) and 52.8% (comp.) respondents view the information they get from the polytechnics print books as relevant and adequate to their field of study. Project works scored higher with 91.5%, 97.2% and 92.5% respondents admitting to the relevance and adequacy of project work to their study.

The research has shown that HND final year engineering students at the Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe do not receive sufficient support in their education and research in terms of information resources/sources provided by Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe library. The none availability of important information resources/source at the polytechnic library apparently hinders the Institution from functioning as instrument of national development. This supports the assertion of Chigbu and Uzoagba (2011) who state that libraries and librarians need to be mobilized appropriately to perform her role as instrument of national development, the absence of which may bring about nonperformance and retrogression in a nation. The high use of printed books and project works revealed in this study (table 3) may be due to their presence in the library, students are likely to make use of other information resources/sources listed if they were provided by the library. Access and use are to some extent influenced by availability as indicated by the result of this study.

Table 1: Response rate

| S/N | Department | N | Total % |
|-----|------------------------------------|-----|---------|
| 1. | Electrical/Electronics Engineering | 118 | 48.6 |
| 2. | Mechanical Engineering | 72 | 29.6 |
| 3. | Computer Engineering | 53 | 21.8 |
| 4. | Total | 243 | 100 |

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 2: Types of information resources/sources available and accessed for study and research by HND students at Otefe Polytechnic library

| S/N | Information resources | Elect/elect. Engr. | | Mech. Engr. | | Comp. Engr. | |
|-----|--|--------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|
| | | freq | % | freq | % | freq | % |
| 1. | Print books | 118 | 100 | 72 | 100 | 53 | 100 |
| 2. | Print journals | 12 | 12.2 | 9 | 12.5 | 3 | 5.7 |
| 3. | Print abstracts and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4. | Project works | 118 | 100 | 72 | 100 | 53 | 100 |
| 5. | Newspapers/magazines | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6. | Manuscripts and other sources of documents | 11 | 9.3 | 3 | 4.2 | - | - |
| 7. | Seminars/conference papers | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. | Technical/scientific reports | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | Online databases | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | Online abstracts and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11. | Electronic books | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 12. | Electronic journals | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | Discussion groups | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14. | Photographs and other visual sources | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | News group | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 3: Types of information resources/sources used by HND students for study and research purposes at the Delta State Polytechnic

| S/N | Information resources | Elect/elect. Engr. | | Mech. Engr. | | Comp. Engr. | |
|-----|--|--------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|
| | | freq. | % | freq. | % | freq | % |
| 1. | Print books | 118 | 100 | 72 | 100 | 53 | 100 |
| 2. | Print journals | 12 | 12.2 | 9 | 12.5 | 3 | 5.7 |
| 3. | Print abstracts and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4. | Project works | 118 | 100 | 72 | 100 | 53 | 100 |
| 5. | Newspapers/magazines | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6. | Manuscripts and other sources of documents | 11 | 9.3 | 3 | 4.2 | - | - |
| 7. | Seminars/conference papers | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. | Technical/scientific reports | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | Online databases | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | Online databases and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11. | Electronic books | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 12. | Electronic journals | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | Discussion groups | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14. | Photographs and other visual sources | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | News group | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 4: Relevance and adequacy of available information resources/sources in students field of study

| S/N | Information resources | Elect/elect. Engr. | | Mech. Engr. | | Comp. Engr. | |
|-----|--|--------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| | | freq. | % | freq. | % | freq. | % |
| 1. | Print books | 58 | 49.2 | 37 | 51.4 | 28 | 52.8 |
| 2. | Print journals | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3. | Print abstracts and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4. | Project works | 108 | 91.5 | 70 | 97.2 | 49 | 92.5 |
| 5. | Newspapers/magazines | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6. | Manuscripts and other sources of documents | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7. | Seminars/conference papers | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. | Technical/scientific reports | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | Online databases | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | Online databases and indexes | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11. | Electronic books | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 12. | Electronic journals | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | Discussion groups | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14. | Photographs and other visual sources | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | News group | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Source: Survey, 2016

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study show that the Delta State Polytechnic Otefe Library needs to be appropriately equipped to be able to function as instrument of national development. The library should be stocked with diverse forms of information resources/sources relevant to students' fields of study. The result shows that the polytechnic library still operates traditional manual system, hence, the obvious absence of electronic information resources. It is important to reiterate that as an information broker the academic library is expected to be equipped with state of the art information resources/sources where students can acquire knowledge to develop skills to contribute to the development of the nation. It is therefore recommended that:

- i. The Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Library should upgrade her collection by providing other information resources/sources such as print abstracts and indexes, newspapers/magazines, seminars/conference papers, technical/scientific reports, online databases, online abstracts and indexes, electronic journals, electronic books, discussion groups, photographs and other visual sources and news group.
- ii. The Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Library management should as a matter of urgency improve on educational and research support services provided by the library to enable the library play the role of an instrument of national development.
- iii. The Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe management should improve on the ICT environment of the polytechnic community in other to partake in the global information society.

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