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Esharenana E. Adomi

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, esharenana.adomi@gmail.com

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Student Expectations of Faculty in a Nigerian LIS School

Dr. Esharenana E. Adomi

Lecturer

Department of Library and Information Science

Delta State University

Abraka, Nigeria

Introduction

Students' views on all aspects of their higher education experiences are essential to the effective monitoring of quality in universities (Hill, Lomas and MacGregor, 2003). In the USA, student evaluation of teaching is part of the faculty member's performance evaluation (Emery, Kramer and Tian, 2003). This is also true of European countries (Curtis, 2002).

In Nigeria, student evaluation of teaching has not yet been introduced in universities. Criteria for assessing academics for promotion in most Nigerian universities include qualifications, teaching, current research, publications, and service to university/country (Mordi, 2002). The reward system for academics in Nigeria, however, is largely based on research excellence (Adomi and Mordi, 2003).

Though students in developed countries are used to participating in teaching evaluation, a search of the literature did not reveal students' expectations of library and information science (LIS) faculty. There is some literature on the traits lecturers are expected to exhibit. Murray, et al. (1996) posit that university teachers are expected to possess content competence; pedagogical competence; the ability to deal with sensitive topics in an open, honest, and respectful way; the ability to contribute to the intellectual development of the student; the ability to treat students' grades, other academic records, and private communications with strict confidentiality; assessment of students that is valid, open, fair, and congruent with the course; and, respect for the institution. These are ethical principles, which are conceptualized as general guidelines, ideals, or expectations that need to be taken into account along with other relevant conditions and circumstances, in the design and analysis of university-college teaching.

Priestly and Kerpneck (1977) assert that the university teacher needs broad knowledge and understanding of the subject as well as a deep knowledge and understanding of at least one substantial area of it. Since their primary business (and that of the university) is teaching, they must know a good deal about what they are teaching and a good deal about how to teach it.

Hill, Lomas, and MacGregor (2003) in their investigation of what students in a number of disciplines perceive as quality education found that students appreciated lecturers who knew their subject, were well organized, and were interesting to talk to. They appreciated lecturers who provided feedback to students during the session and in assignments, and also liked teachers who were easy to be with and helped them to learn.

IFLA (2001) maintains that the academic (teaching) staff of LIS education programmes should be sufficient to accomplish programme objectives; the full-time faculty member qualifications should include research-based competence in the designated areas, technological proficiency, effectiveness in teaching, a sustained record of scholarship, and active participation in appropriate professional associations. These expectations are akin to those set forth earlier.

Through there are a number of studies on traits an academic should possess, none has focused on student expectations of the qualities/traits of LIS lecturers. This study attempts to fill this gap. The subjects for this study are final year undergraduate students of the Department of Library and Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study is a survey designed to collect primary data on students' expectations in October 2005. The researcher, at the end of a lecture session, requested final year undergraduate students of the Department of Library and Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria to list five qualities which they expect LIS lecturers to possess. The students submitted them before leaving the lecture hall. Of the 155 students, 99 (63%) responded to the request.

Final year students were used because they have had enough interaction with lecturers and therefore had adequate experience to respond intelligently to the question. Items that were similar were merged into broader terms/qualities. The results are presented in the table below.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Qualities students expect from LIS faculty (n=99)

Qualities	No	%
Good knowledge of the course/subject he is teaching	55	56
Dress well	54	55
Punctuality	48	49
Should be able to impart knowledge to the students	45	46
Friendliness	26	27
Love for students	26	27
Approachable	25	26
Objectivity in students' assessment	10	11
Strict/principled	10	11
Innovative/creative/resourceful	7	8
Possess counselling skills/helpful	6	7
Make information available to students/guide or direct students to relevant sources of information	4	4
Practical knowledge of the course	3	3
Exemplary	3	3
Honest/transparent/God fearing	3	3
Prepare well before coming to class	3	3
No consensual relationship with students	2	2
Good researcher/writer	1	1
Introduce new trends/developments/knowledge to the course/update lecture notes	1	1

Subject knowledge ranks highest with 55. King (1985) has observed that continuing education is crucial for LIS faculty, since the information field is growing and changing so rapidly. Lecturing is an activity that requires a high level of academic excellence (Adomi and Ogbomo, 2001).

Some of the students would like their lecturers to dress well. They would like their teachers to be neatly dressed and presentable. Punctuality ranks third. Students expect their lecturers to come to class as arranged in the schedule of classes. Punctuality is a mark of discipline, dedication, responsiveness and seriousness. When a lecturer attends classes on time and regularly, he will be able to complete the syllabus/scheme of work before exam. He will not need to rush the students towards examination nor unable to complete the course.

Some respondents expect their lecturers to be able to impart knowledge to them. The lecturer should be a good communicator, interactive with students; a good facilitator of debate and discussion (Hill, Lomas and MacGregor, 2003) The lecturer must be able to communicate the knowledge to the student; he should be able to employ different methods. He is expected to have good command of the language of instruction, employ teaching techniques such as questioning, discussion, and lecturing, as well as use of media/instructional technology during teaching. Methods of teaching should be designed to develop and enhance students' interpersonal skills and team work skills (IFLA, 2001).

Objectivity in assessment is another trait that students expect. A very important aspect of the lecturer's work is evaluation of students. The evaluation takes the form of continuous assessment and written examinations. The lecturer must provide feedback to the student after grading. Murray, et al. 1996 state that

- students' assessment must be valid, open, fair, and congruent with course objectives
- students are not to be graded on skills that were not part of the announced course objectives or were not included in the course content
- lecturers are expected to communicate assessment procedures and grading standards clearly to students at the beginning of the course
- students' exams, papers, and assignments must be graded carefully and fairly through the use of a marking system that can be communicated to students
- teachers are expected to be fair and objective in writing letters of reference for students

It should be noted also that the Academic Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), to which all Nigerian academics subscribe, places a high premium on professionalism, objectivity, and hard work of its members (Iyayi, 2002).

There are students who would like LIS academics to possess counselling skills/be helpful. This finding is in line with IFLA (2001) guideline which states that students in LIS educational programmes should have advisory assistance in constructing a coherent programme of study to meet career aspirations consistent with the educational programme's mission, goals, and objectives. Staff advisers are expected to be appointed for every level of study to guide students with course registration and other academic matters. Lecturers should be able to help students resolve problems they encounter in the programme. Murray et al (1996) advise that students' academic records and private communication/discussions are confidential materials, and should only be released if the student has consented in writing, and if the disclosure is necessary for performance of the teacher's duties; an exemption to this is if the lecturer has reasonable grounds to believe that there is risk of significant harm to the health or safety of the student or others.

There are students who expect their lecturers to possess ICT knowledge/skills. This finding is in consonance with IFLA's (2001) stance that the LIS teacher should have technological proficiency. An LIS academic should be computer literate and be knowledgeable in Internet resources and services. He or she should be able to use modern technological media to deliver lectures. Teachers should be able to introduce IT/ICT components in any course being taught, in order for graduates of the programme to apply ICT when employed in libraries and information centres.

A small number (3%) of the respondents expect their lecturers to have "practical" knowledge of the course. This implies, for example, that a cataloguer's lecturer should not only have theoretical

knowledge but should demonstrate how to catalogue. The faculty member who teaches research methodology course should have practical knowledge of research and must have been an ardent researcher.

Not having "consensual relationships" with students, i.e., an intimate or sexual relationship, was mentioned by some respondents. The professional relationship between staff and students should be based on mutual trust and respect and the requisite boundaries recognised. This is particularly important where staff are involved in assessment procedures which may determine the students' future. It is not acceptable for any member of staff to abuse their power through a sexual relationship (The Educational Institute of Scotland, 2004). In order to avoid a conflict of interest, a lecturer does not enter into relationships with students which are likely to detract from the student's development or lead to actual or perceived favouritism on the part of the teacher; while there are definite pedagogical benefits to establishing a good rapport with students, it is the responsibility of the teacher to keep relationships with students focused on pedagogical goals and academic requirements (Murray et al., 1996).

Conclusion

The following are recommended in the light of the findings of the survey.

- * LIS Lecturers should be aware that students expect them to possess some academic traits/competence and modes of behaviour.

- * Lecturers should ensure that they are deeply knowledgeable in the course(s) they are teaching. They are required to read relevant professional/academic literature, acquire requisite academic qualifications, and take advantage of continuing education programmes.

- * The academic should employ relevant teaching methods

- * LIS teachers should ensure that they acquire IT literacy and introduce IT components (where necessary) to the courses they teach

- * The lecturers should be friendly and approachable to their students.

- * LIS teachers should be objective in assessment and ensure that students are provided with feedback on their performance

- * Efforts should be made by LIS educators' associations/bodies, professional associations, and other relevant authorities to develop a code of conduct for LIS academics.

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