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Higher Education and Information Literacy: A Case Study of Tai Solarin University of Education

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Introduction

Universities prepare people for professional careers. This enables individuals to participate with greater understanding in community affairs. The 21st century has brought enormous change in higher education throughout the world as a result of new information and technological developments.

Rader and Allan (2006) observe that these changes affect every segment of society and all levels of education. New learning centres are evolving based on the concepts of resource-based teaching and lifelong learning. Students need high levels of literacy in every phase of their education. Given the complex information and communication technology environment and the increasing global interactions, students must attain excellent communication and information skills to function productively in the work force of the future.

Higher education is undergoing major changes globally. Stallings (1997) states that legislators, funding agencies and consumers of higher education are demanding approximate learning outcomes and graduates prepared to function successfully within the global economy. The effect of technology on libraries has been especially noteworthy during the past decade. Many consider the library less important since they believe that the Internet is the world's library, yet libraries are one of the most important components of the information age, dealing successfully with technological advances. Accordingly, librarians are helping society understand the value and contributions of libraries, particularly in organizing, preserving, and providing access to information.

Statement of the Problem

The use of information for research is an important basis for academic progress. In light of this, this study explores students' use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research and the reason for choosing ICT as a tool.

Objectives of the Study

Determine:

- Students' proficiency in using ICT

- The extent to which ICT solves their research problems.
- Source of Internet connection
- Type of information sought
- Preference for Internet over library resources.
- Problems in using the library.
- Problems in using the Internet.

Research Questions

- What kinds of information do users look for?
- Which Internet sources fulfill their research needs?
- What are the major constraints on their Internet use?
- What are the benefits of using the Internet?

Methodology

The study uses a questionnaire to collect data. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to both library users and the users of e-library and e-learning. One hundred questionnaires were returned.

Background

Tai Solarin University of Education, located in Ijagun, Ijebu-ode, Ogun State Nigeria, was established in the late 1970s years ago as a college of education. The institution became a university of education in February 2005. It is the premier university of education in Nigeria with a student population of 18,114 and staff strength of about 1,050. The institution offers degree programmes in science, social science, arts and vocational education. It has an e-learning centre that provides Internet and other services to the academic community.

Furthermore, the university library is centralized and the collection is being upgraded. The collection has just under 17,000 volumes, with a library building that provides study space and work areas.

Literature Review

Information technology, as defined by Oketunji (2002), is the application of computer and communication technology to information handling. The use of these technologies requires training, which brings about information literacy. Information literacy includes library literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, research literacy, and critical thinking skills. Information literacy, as viewed by Bruce and Candy (2006), is a global issue, with particularly strong efforts and examples in North America, Australia, South Africa, and Northern Europe.

Teachers, librarians, and others are working to integrate information skills instruction into the curriculum to achieve relevant learning outcomes. The era of mass higher education has led to the challenge of increasingly divergent student study skills. The need to use a mix of print and electronic resources, and the explosion of materials freely available on the web, has made the search for information seem easier to do and more complex to manage (Godwin, 2006). Bruce (1999) emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, an awareness of personal and professional ethics, information evaluation, organizing information, interacting with information professionals, and making effective use of problem solving, decision making, and research skills. Resource-based education encourages better use of information resources and services.

Information literacy is a cumulative process, which must be adapted to the requirements of each learner. Barriers to the development of information skills are identified by Godwin (2006) and include lack of appreciation and ignorance shown by teaching staff:

- There perception that all that is needed is to use a library catalogue, and the library databases comes from their inability to find time to grapple with the effects of information explosion.
- Lack of institutional commitment to information skills combined with absence of time slots in the curriculum.
- The final barrier belief that they already know how to get information and are apathetic about receiving any professional help. (Godwin 2006)

Universities provide the foundation for continued growth throughout students' careers as well as in students' rights as informed citizens. Goad (2002) advocates information literacy as an essential workplace skill appropriate to today's knowledge-driven workplace. Consequently, Naghshineh (2006) argues that the success of information literacy depends on the following:

- Knowledge generation, identification and dissemination: Books, tapes, films, diskettes are all but media and the functional aspects of knowledge have essentially remained unchanged. Students should be taught to treat these materials as forms for a function. Students should learn to understand the background processes leading to generation of knowledge, identify them and examine various modes of dissemination.
- Sociology, Psychology and communication: As members of a service sector, students should be furnished with the tools that will enable them to better serve the community that has a demand for an information service. This directly correlates with value perception, and thus engenders community support of library activities.
- Technology and management: This does not focus inordinately on computers, but rather on how technology facilitates library activity. Students should not be trained in any specific technology, but rather given the basic tools to be able to better identify and adapt the best technology to the task at hand. The same goes for management activities such as resource sharing.

A number of studies of Internet use have been done by African authors. Jagboro (2003) as quoted by Omotayo (2006) reports that majority of postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University ranked fourth on the use of Internet. A study by Omotayo (2006) observes that undergraduates learn the use of Internet through their friends. Badu and Makwei (2005) looked at awareness and use of the Internet in Ghana.

Discussion of Findings

Cosmas - College of Management Sciences

COSIT - College of Science & Information Technology

COHUM - College of Humanities

COAVOET College of Applied Education & Vocational Technology

Table 1: Frequency of use by Colleges

Colleges	Frequency	Percentage
COSMAS	10	10%
COSIT	35	35%

COAVOET	40	40%
COHUM	15	15%
Total	100	100%

The data indicates that those in College of Applied Education make more use of information resources than other colleges.

Table II: Use of Information Resources by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	58	58%
Female	42	42%
Total	100	100%

There were somewhat more male respondents than female.

Table III: Proficiency in the use of ICT

	Frequency	Percentage
Good	31	31%
Fair	49	49%
Poor	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Just under one third of respondents rated their ICT proficiency as "good."

Table IV: Where knowledge of computers was acquired

	Frequency	Percentage
In school	3	3%
Outside of school	64	64%
No particular place	33	33%
Total	100	100%

Nearly two thirds of respondents learned about computers outside the University, while one third got their knowledge from "no particular place," and just 3% acquired their knowledge through university programmes.

Table V: Information sources

	Frequency	Percentage
On Web	75	75%
Library	25	25%
Total	100	100%

The response is a clear indication of a preference for web resources over library resources.

Table VI: Types of Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Academic	56	56%
Politics	14	14%
Sport	10	10%
Others	20	20%
Total	100	100%

More than half of respondents' information seeking is for academic purposes.

Table VII: Web searching

	Frequency	Percentage
Yahoo	20	20%
Google	67	67%
Altavista	6	6%
Hotbot	0	0%
Others	7	7%
Total	100	100%

Google is overwhelmingly popular as a search engine

Table VIII: Source of Internet connection

	Frequency	Percentage
Cybercafé	74	74%
Library	12	12%
Lecturer's office	7	7%
Home	7	7%
Total	100	100%

Nearly three quarters of respondents access the Internet at a cybercafé.

Table IX : Computer education part of University Curriculum.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	78	78%

No	22	22%
Total	100	100%

More than three quarters of respondent use computers as part of the university curriculum.

Problems Using the Library and the Internet

Respondents outlined problems encountered when looking for information from the library and the e-learning centre.

- Lack of textbooks on home economics, sciences, and counseling psychology.
- Lack of knowledge of how to use catalogues.
- Noise from both library staff and students.
- Lack of air conditioning in the reading rooms.
- Crowding during exam period.
- Slow speed of the Internet.
- Lack of proficiency in the use of computer.
- Opening hours not adequate.

Conclusion

Information literacy has gained importance as we become more immersed in the information age. The ability to access, evaluate, and use information is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and education. Information literacy is about finding, evaluating, using, and subsequently communicating information effectively to solve problems. Wherever it comes from, the Internet, the library, or any other source, the most important thing is the ability to understand and evaluate information.

Recommendations

Information literacy is a critical component of higher education. It is however, desirable for educators to work collaboratively to ensure that students graduating from higher education courses can recognize and solve information problems. The university should integrate information literacy into all their programmes with college members and librarians working together.

Moreover, the university should work on the e-learning bandwidth to enable fast and easy access to search engines to satisfy the information needs of users. A new library has just been commissioned for students. Air conditioning should be provided to make the environment conducive to reading and research, and the e-library section should be equipped with more computers and additional databases. Noise is also an issue, and steps should be taken to reduce it. The library collection needs further enhancement, especially in lean areas such as home economics, the sciences, and vocational texts.

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