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## INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS VIS- A-VIS INFORMATION UTILIZATION OF STUDENTS OF POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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**INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS VIS- A-VIS  
INFORMATION UTILIZATION OF STUDENTS OF  
POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

This work examined the extent of information literacy skills of polytechnic students as regards to their information utilization on their academic work in southeast Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study with the population of 398 from four polytechnics institutions in southeast Nigeria. Structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection and reliability of the study was established using conbach Alpha. Data collected was analyzed using arithmetic mean. From the analysis, a grand mean score of the extent students possess in information literacy skill points to the fact that students possess these skills to a low extent. And the analysis of 2.02 grand mean on challenges depicts that the students actually encounter much challenges which include computer incompetency on the part of students and librarians, few credit courses assigned to information literacy in their schools, poor cordial relationship between librarians and faculty members, erratic power supply among others. Based on the findings, this study therefore recommends the use seminars and workshops should be organized for students on information literacy skills, polytechnics students' curriculum should be reviewed to reflect computer literacy and finally alternative to power should be provided to aid information access and utilization.

Keywords: Information literacy, Students, Polytechnic Education, Libraries, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

The perquisite of knowledge production and its utilization lies within the purview of information literacy and this enables the seeker to define, manage, evaluate, integrate, access, create communicate and transform the knowledge acquired into effective use for Nations development. However, Information literacy is multi-dimensional in nature when acquired and used. Hence, it is imperatively used in Academic institutions for learning, teaching and research. Information being the "life wire" as well as "fuel for development" has the ability to transform the economic, educational, religious and technological lives of people in the societies. And for these reasons the knowledge and acquisition of information becomes important as it seeks to address how information is processed for the purpose of answering queries and gives opportunity to know when, how and where to seek for knowledge at any time. It then throws more light on the "term" Information Literacy which Arunachalam (1986) that the sustainability of information literacy skill

among students has the ability to transform social, political, economic and technological sector of any nation. Information literacy is assumed to be the survival skills of any society because informed citizens of the world need to know how to find many forms of information, sift through, weigh it and draw their conclusions. In the era when new technologies and sources of information literacy penetrate at a breakneck speed, it is then necessary that individuals becomes information literate to be enabled and brass up with the new trend, hence its essential to the acquisition and use of these skills in the changing world. To this end, the ability to access, evaluate and use information is prerequisite to learning and basic requirement for the information society.

The role information play in technological progress of any nation cannot be neglected as it stands to form bases for action plans and policies in decision making. No country can thrive economically and politically without adequate planning and functional policies. Notably, effective plan comes when there are adequate and relevant record, data, statistics and information as to give insight. Adequate knowledge can serve as a buffer and a reference to arriving at a result or conclusion for the emergence of new ideas and inventions, and this becomes possible through a good knowledge of information literacy. Invariably considering the importance of information in the lives of individuals, students are not left out in their quest for the relevant information in their learning and research thus their position “today” as regards to becoming the leaders of future generation whose shoulders lay on planning and execution of “tomorrow’s” events, for this reason there is need for them to have the skill on how to retrieve, evaluate and utilized the right information in a right format for the nations prosperity.

It is imperative that students of higher institutions especially polytechnic should have a good knowledge on how to navigate through the myriads of information available globally. This stipulates why students need information literacy skill to be able to handle their academic work, and proper application of these information as it concerns the society at large. This supports what Okoye (2019) states, that information literacy helps people to know when, how and where information is needed and having the ability to evaluate and use it. Polytechnic education institution being a major academic environment where knowledge is generated and transformed, has a great role in nation building and in the production of quality students that can compete with other students globally. In this case the students desire information literacy skill for healthy competition and effective development. No wonder, Lawal and Atueyi (2017), opine that polytechnic education plays a vital role in human resource development of a country by creating

skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. This confirms what Obasi (2011), that polytechnics are those technical educational institutions which offer variety of programmes and courses at various spheres of technology or human endeavor ranging from Fine and Applied Arts to Engineering. Ogungbe (2019) opines that polytechnic education helps in the promotion of technical and vocational education, training, technology transfer and skill, all for the development and enhancement of the social economic development of a country.

As the volume of information is constantly increasing, likewise search skills are needed, not only to have access to provided information resources but also to sift from the large quantity and utilize the most appropriate information resources. According to Uhegbu (2007), the utilization of information is the putting into use the acquired information, more so the utilization of information differs from person to person and from one corporate organization to the other according to their information needs. It was observed that the information providers are not probably faced with the challenge of providing information rather with the problem of getting people to properly access and use the provided information. Okoye (2020) stated that some breakthroughs made in our society “today” are all product of well researched work and quality research has its root on the quantum and adequate information available. Similarly polytechnic students also require information resources be it print or electronic, for use in order to carry out research, read, write test, assignments and do examinations. To overcome complex and anxiety during learning, research and examination writing, polytechnic students should have the ability to explore, interpret and utilize the available information resources at their disposal, more so, take rational decision on the right and appropriate information to use for their benefit and that of the society. Hence, the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of information for use in any academic environment is an essential skill which students and librarians must possess. In essence, being information literate is rudimental to utilization of any type and form of information.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Libraries have been revolutionized by the growth in technology and accumulation of digital files. This has led to the storage of information in both print and electronic format. However, there are speculations that most information resources provided are underutilized due to the fact that a huge population of polytechnic students do not possess information literacy skills. This study therefore,

aims at determining the extent information literacy skills of polytechnic students aid their information usage in southeast Nigeria. As it exposes various challenges to that effect.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited to the extent information literacy skills of polytechnic students, aid their information utilization in southeast Nigeria. The polytechnics covered, are Federal polytechnic Oke, IMT Enugu, Federal polytechnic Nekede and Abia polytechnic Aba. The study investigated the extent of information literacy skills possessed by polytechnic students, challenges faced by students while acquiring the possessed skills and suggestions to the challenges.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. What information literacy skills do polytechnic students of Southeast Nigeria possess?
2. What challenges do polytechnics students in Southeast Nigeria encounter while acquiring those information literacy skills?
3. What are the solutions to those challenges while acquiring the information literacy skills by the students?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is need for information literacy in work places especially in academic environment and because of its importance in carrying out research, learning and handling of the office files and data as they come in and go out. Okoye, (2020) emphasized that each type of information is known by its function and what it stands to address. For this reason, it is important that the information user should have adequate knowledge on how to source and use information and thus the need for information literacy. According to Hargittai (2006), "Information literacy implies the intellectual capabilities involved in using information". He explained that, it is different from the technical know-how required for using information technologies that hold or deliver data. Skyline College (2011), information literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use and communicate information in all its various formats. CILLIP, (2018) added that information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgments about any information we find and use. Information explosion has facilitated the need, to obtain, evaluate and use information for academic programmes and learning throughout one's life (Ivanitskaya, O'boyle and Casey, 2006).

This gives room why students of polytechnics need these skills to write project, seminar papers and conference proceedings.

However, Information literacy cannot be achieved without an individual having a competent skill, that is why Madison College (2020), enumerates some information literacy skills to include research skills, critical thinking skills, computer technology skills and communication skills. Research skill, allows one to gather, analyze and interpret information on a topic in order to find a solution to a problem, Computer communication skill enables one to determine how valid an information is. Computer skill is an important skill that makes work easy and it also makes one use the necessary and appropriate software for research especially for students and library professionals. On the other hand, communication skill entails ability to receive and convey all kinds of information retrieved to other source or medium. It could be achieved verbally, non-verbally or in written form.

The definition of information literacy skill by Madison College (2020) entails

- a. Having knowledge on how to get involved in retrieving information in the digital world.
- b. Extracting important information from what you have found.
- c. co-coordinating the extracted information.
- d. knowing how the information can be adequately used.
- e. Checking how you can play a good role in your profession
- f. Evaluating information for credibility and authoritativeness

An information literate person will be able to Identify fake news and sources, ascertain how trustworthy and reliable they are, be familiar with data bases, and find good information using search engines (Harris 2016). Nwabueze (2014), states that if an individual possess information literacy skills, he/she is considered competent and an independent learner. It means the person can actively engage in the world of ideas, display confidence in the ability to solve problems and know what relevant information is. Harris (2016) stated that information literate individual possess the ability to answer, identify and check information sources before making it known. In another development, it was observed that the undergraduates in the polytechnics, do not have sound background to fundamental research and information competency skills. This assertion was confirmed by Issa and Amusan (2015) that students of polytechnics find it difficult to navigate through the library' resources hence, the low level of the exposure to the annual library orientation

and the course on use of library. He therefore stressed that lack of facilities as well as lack of the understanding of information literacy coupled with students' non-challant attitude towards attending information literacy sessions and low acceptance of online approach militate against librarians and their efforts in these regards. Ilogho and Nkiko (2014) in Issa and Amusa (2015), summarized the ineffectiveness of polytechnic students in acquiring information literacy skills by buttressing that there are justifiable facts to prove that information literacy skill is a key ingredient missing at all levels of education in Nigeria especially the tertiary levels.

Invariably, there are many factors that poses challenge to sound acquisition of information literacy skills of students of Nigerian polytechnic students, inadequate collaboration between librarians and faculty on information literacy to support students and assist them to find information, write references and complete assignments. Bell (2008) identified the attitude of faculty colleagues as a challenge to the success of information literacy. Hardesty (2005), opines that faculty members who hold on to the values of faculty culture as lack of time, lay emphasis on content professional autonomy, and academic freedom. That is to say that Librarian-faculty relation has long been a significant component of the profession of librarians. For faculty, librarian-faculty relations are of little or no concern. There has been controversy over time, if faculty members perceive collaboration with librarian as necessary or not, (Christiansen 2004). This attributed to the neglect of information literacy in the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institution.

However, Idiodi (2005) emphasized that, training would impart skills and lead to the effective and efficient use of libraries and a better overall educational achievement. He stressed further that high level of computer illiteracy among Nigerian librarians is a significant challenge. Alakpodia (2010), argued that in southeast Nigeria, librarians are handicap in trying to keep abreast with the new trend of librarianship as regards information literacy skill. Despite that, Infoguide (2021), stressed that although Nigeria is recording an improvement in the level of computer literacy, this still hasn't made up for the inadequacy in computer skilled labor and students. In addition, most students "today" find it difficult to operate computers. Agbo (2014), stresses that unstable power supply and unstable internet connectivity are some of the problems affecting the acquisition of information literacy skills in Nigerian polytechnics institutions.

More so, Obaro (2021) on information literacy skills then found out that a correlate use of library resources among polytechnic students in Delta State Nigeria. The finding further indicated low



level of information literacy skill as possessed by the students. Based on this, the researcher recommended that collaborative efforts should exist between the management of polytechnics librarians and other teaching staff which will geared towards developing student's information literacy skills for suitable independent learning. Yet in another study, Igwe (2012), carried out a survey on the information literacy skills of students in Federal polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State Nigeria, on this study it was noticed that information literacy education was not a compulsory course in the instruction.

## METHODOLOGY

The sample for the study is 398 students of four polytechnics in southeast. Proportionate stratified simple random sampling deemed appropriate because, there are sub sets that constitute the population. The population was stratified according to polytechnics in each state in southeast. A sample ratio of 0.004 was used to multiply across the population from each polytechnic. Based on this, the sample from IMT is 126, Oko polytechnic 155, Abia polytechnic 50, and Nekede 65.

Method of data analysis.

Analysis of data was done using arithmetic mean. The response options were weighted thus; for question 1,

Very high extent -----3.50----4.00

High extent -----2.50----3.49

Low extent -----1.50----2.49

Very high extent -----1.00----1.49

A higher value will indicate a positive response than a lower one. The mid-point is 2.50.

Values of 2.50 and above were rated positive while items below 2.50 were rated negative. For questions 2 and 3, items up to the value of 2.50 were rated Agree while those less than 2.50 were rated Disagree

### Mean rating of the extent southeast Nigerian polytechnic Students possess information skills

1	Ability to understand and use current and emerging information technology	N 95,000	Mean 2.20	Remark Low extent
2	Ability to adopt to the use of software and hardware in carrying out assignments	95,000	1.94	Low extent
3	Ability to publish research work using electronic mails and CD ROMs in academic activities			

		95,000	1.99	Low extent
4	Ability to critically evaluate information sources and information in the course of carrying out academic assignments	95,000	1.82	Low extent
5	Ability to be friendly with information data bases	95,000	2.19	Low extent
6	Ability to identify fake news and sources	95,000	1.20	Very low extent
7	Ability to interpret results in order to find a good topic for research	95,000	2:11	Low extent
8	Ability to present information in a good format	95,000	2.41	Low extent
9	Ability to use information to solve problems and make decisions	95,000	2:32	Low extent
	Grand total of mean		2.02	Low extent

A close look at table 1 shows that the extent to which polytechnic students in southeast Nigeria possess information literacy skills is to a low extent. The item by item analysis indicates that eight of the nine information literacy skills listed, are possessed by students at a low extent while one is possessed to a very low extent.

The grand mean score of 2.02 on the above table points to the fact that the listed information literacy skills are not well possessed by students.

### **The mean rating of the challenges southeast Nigerian polytechnic students encounter while acquiring information literacy skills**

1	There are many credit courses assigned to information literacy in my school.	95000	2.33	Disagree
2	There is a good cordial relationship between librarians and faculty members in my school	95000	2.41	Disagree
3	There is a good power supply to aid the acquisition of information literacy skills in my school	95000	2.21	Disagree
4	There are highly equipped libraries to aid in the acquisition of information literacy skill in my school	95000	2.11	Disagree
5	Students in my school possess good computer literacy skill	95000	2.42	Disagree
6	Librarians in my school can operate computers effectively	95000	2..32	Disagree
7	Information literacy certificate serves as a pre-requisite for graduating from my school	95000	2.00	Disagree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.26</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

The grand mean score of 2.26 on the above table points to the fact that the listed items greatly affect the acquisition of information literacy skills by polytechnic students in southeast Nigeria. These items include good power supply, computer literacy skills on the part of students and librarians, information literacy certificate being a pre-requisite for graduation of students and others. Respondents disagree in all the seven items listed above.

**The mean rating of the solutions to the challenges encountered by southeast Nigerian polytechnic students in acquiring of information literacy skill**

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Remark
1.	There should be frequent organization of seminars and workshops for students in the area of information literacy skills	95000	3.77	Agree
2.	Information literacy curriculum should be expanded to reflect computer literacy and information technology skills	95000	2.65	Agree
3.	There should be regular assessment of students to evaluate their competencies in information literacy skills	95000	3.79	Agree
4	There should be an installment of solar as additional source of power in my school	95000	3.10	Agree
5	There should be stand –by leister to facilitate the supply of power when needed in my school	95000	2.29	Agree
6	There should be adequate provision of fund to purchase computers and its facilities for students’ use in order to facilitate the acquisition of information literacy skills	95000	3.02	Agree
7	My school should make it compulsory for each student to obtain a certificate in information literacy skill before graduation from the school.	95000	3.10	Agree
	Grand mean	3.10		Agree

Table 3 shows that all the listed items agree to the listed solutions to the challenges encountered by Nigerian southeast polytechnic students in acquiring information literacy skills. The mean scores of all the items range from 2.65 to 3.10. Each of the mean scores is above 2.5 which indicates a positive response.

### **Discussion, conclusion and recommendations.**

Given the extent of information literacy skills acquired by southeast Nigerian polytechnic students. The findings reveal that southeast Nigerian polytechnic students actually possess some of these literacy skills. However, the extent at which they possess them seems worrisome and the ability of students to understand, use and adapt to the use of software, publish research work, identify fake news, interpret results, present information in a good format is greatly to a low extent. This is in line with Tyler (2011) who stresses that though the library campus of polytechnic students and website is used for assignment however, students find it difficult to complete assignments simply because they lack the needed library skills.

Similarly the challenges students of southeast Nigerian polytechnics students encounter while acquiring information literacy skills. This finding shows that so many challenges inhibit the acquisition of information literacy skills by polytechnic students. These challenges include few credit courses assigned to information literacy, poor supply of power, uncordial relationship between librarians and faculty members, unequipped libraries and computer incompetency on part of students and librarians. Furthermore, the findings also points to the fact that obtaining a certificate in information literacy skill is not prioritized as a pre-requisite for graduation from polytechnics in southeast Nigeria. To summarize the existence of the aforementioned challenges, Alijam (2015), opines that polytechnic students' unfamiliarity with the concept of digital library coupled with other factors like erratic power supply, uncordial relationship between librarians and faculty members inhibit students' acquisition of information skill

In addition the solutions to the challenges southeast Nigerian polytechnic students encounter while acquiring information literacy skills. The study indicated that it is very important that students acquire sound information literacy skills in order to face the digitalization of information resources. To achieve this, the study reveals that frequent seminars and workshops should always be organized for students in order to improve on their information literacy skills. In addition,

students should be assessed on a regular basis to assess their skills in terms of information retrieval. Provision of solar system as an additional source of power was also suggested by students. Furthermore, adequate funds should be provided for buying computers to facilitate the acquisition of information literacy skills. The study also reveals the importance of making the obtaining of information literacy skill as a pre-requisite for the award of either HND or OND certificates. Conclusively, the skills acquired by southeast Nigerian polytechnic students are not good enough to face the challenges posed by the globalization of digital world. This is because they have acquired these skills to a low extent given the numerous challenges they face in the course of possessing them. This in turn, affects their ability to make use of information resources.

### **Recommendations**

The study was able to identify types of literacy skills possessed by the students but to a low extent and therefore recommend that seminars and workshops should be organized for students, in the area of information literacy skills for them, to know the need and the importance of it in their learning and research.

Numerous challenges were discovered in the students' quest to possess information literacy skills and study recommend that the curriculum of these polytechnics should be reviewed and expanded to reflect information literacy especially on computer technology skills

The study further recommend the award of certificates in the area of information literacy skill, and this should be priotized as a pre-requisite for graduating from these polytechnics and again the stakeholders should install solar panel as an alternative source to power in each polytechnics in case of power failure to enhance the utilization of electronic information resources when needed.

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