Article

TEACHING THE USE OF LIBRARY AS A CREDIT EARNING COURSE IN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, ABEOKUTA

Fehintola Nike Onifade,* Issac Busayo** & Olusola Bamidele Bamigboye***

Abstract

The study examines the introduction of the use of library as a credit earning course to students at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Students in six colleges out of eight took part in the study. 570 (62%) of the respondents were male while 350 (38%) were female. The study revealed that the students like the introduction of the course but would like the teaching method to be improved upon. However, the librarian lecturers are also facing some challenges, such as insufficient lecture hours and largest of classes among other things, in teaching the course. Recommendations were proffered to improve the teaching of the course and to make it more beneficial to students.

Keywords: Teaching, Use of Library, Credit Earning Course, University, Nigeria.

Introduction

The university libraries generally grow simultaneously with their parent institutions to generate knowledge and provide scholarly information resources to facilitate and support the curriculum. In order to compliment students' learning the National University Commission (NUC) which is the supervisory body for all Nigerian universities made it mandatory for all universities in Nigeria to include in their curriculum the library literacy course (Noah, 2004). The aim of this is to expose students to the art of using the library: thereby developing the habit of independent learning. It is however, dishearten that some Nigerian universities have not complied with this directive while those who seem to have embraced the idea are not fully committed to its philosophy; since the course is not being given its proper place which should be the foundation for all other academic courses. The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta,

(UNAAB) have over years had a running battle with the General Studies Unit to allow the library teach the use of library as a credit earning course to students until recently when the concession was final given. Hence, the use of library course (GNS 203) was introduced to students dining the second semester of 2009/2010 session.

Objectives

This study was set out to examine

1. the disposition of students to the introduction of use of library (GNS 203) as a course
2. The challenges faced by librarians in teaching the course.

Brief History of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB) was established on January 8, 1988. It was among the three Universities of Agriculture established by the federal government of Nigeria. The University starred off from the old campus of Abeokuta Grammar School, Isale-Igbein at the center of the Abeokuta city, the capital of Ogun State. It finally moved to its permanent site along Alabata Road in 1997. At its inception, the university had five colleges namely;

College of Agricultural Management, Rural Development and Consumer Studies (COLAMRUCS); College of Animal Science and livestock Production (COLANIM), College of Environmental Resources Management (COLERM); College of Natural Sciences (COLNAS); College of Plant Science and Crop Protection (COLPLANT). Two additional colleges were added to the existing one in March 2002. These are College of Engineering (COELENG) and College of Veterinary Medicine (COLVET). During 2008/2009 session, the College of Agricultural Management, Rural Development and Consumer Studies split into two with two new colleges emerging as College of Food Science and Human Ecology (COLFHEC) and College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development (COLMRUD).

As at date the University runs 21 undergraduate, 19 post-graduate diploma, 39 masters and 38 PhD programs in the field of Agriculture, Communication, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Natural Sciences and Veterinary Medicines. All the academic programs have been accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC), except Veterinary and Engineering programs which were given interim accreditation (UNAAB

University Calendar, 2010). As at December 2010 the students' population was over 10,000.

Literature Review

Ojiambo (1988) in his report on library services in Africa posited that majority of students still leave school without developing reading habits and cannot even retrieve or use information outside the classroom while Badu (1981) in another study at the University of Ghana revealed that there is low level of understanding of the library and the use of bibliographic tools among graduate students. This may be due to the fact that information literacy has not been accorded its right position in tertiary education curriculum in Africa (Ojedokun and Lumande 2005).

Hence, Qiu and Liu, (2008) stated that libraries will exert better functions by way of carrying out reader education. This will enable the library to raise the capacities of readers to make use of literature and information resources or to improve the information consciousness of the library users. Moreover, Edem and Lawal (1996) had earlier noted that one of the ways of stimulating the active use of books and other materials housed in the library is to teach the users how to obtain information from available resources. Librarians therefore should be seen as educators who have important roles to play in making students use the resources of the library. Oyinloye (2002) therefore claimed that the use of library as a course is designed to teach Nigerian undergraduates how to maximize the use of the resources acquired by the library.

In highlighting the importance of information literacy in higher education Dadzie (2009) stated that some fresh students entering colleges and university have limited knowledge of fundamental research and information competency skill and may not have learn how to locate information or how to use it in original work and give proper credit for the information used. University libraries should thus be involved in the teaching and learning process to guide and enable students improve their information literacy skills.

The course, use of library is also being variously referred to as library literacy, users' education, library skills, library instruction, bibliographic instruction, information literacy and so on depending on each library's perception and experience (Oluwole 2008). No matter what the course is called the aim is to help students develop

awareness and appreciation of the potentialities of the library in support of their academic career (Noah 2004). Though, Oluwole (2008) expressed the fear that African university libraries still need to restructure their information literacy courses as there is no uniform method of teaching the course. Ofulue (2010) however, observed that the type of user education given to Nigerian university students is inadequate and out of date compared to what is obtainable in developed countries.

A lot of challenges are still been encountered in teaching the use of library as a university course. Chan (2003) declared that it has not been an easy task teaching a minimum of 6000 students per year at the University of Malaysia. The situation is not different in Nigeria; Oyinloye (2002) affirmed that there is always problem of inadequate classroom to accommodate the large number of students. Coupled with this is the fact that in Nigerian universities, teaching of the use of library as a course is within the framework of General Studies Program (GPS) and this has made it difficult to allot enough time and unit to the course to make it more effective and beneficial to students (Oyinloye, 2002 and Oluwole, 2008). Furthermore, Badke (2007) was of the opinion that the teaching of information literacy would be more effective when it is taught as a distinct course within a major discipline.

Methodology

Descriptive research survey was used for this study while the data were collected through the use of questionnaire. The use of library course was taken by 200 level students in six colleges during the second semester of 2009/2010 session and first semester of 2010/ 2011 session. Students from COLANIM, COLAMRUD and COLPLANT took the course during the second semester of 2009/2010 session. 500 copies of the questionnaire were administered randomly among them on their last day of lecture during the semester. Also students from COLNAS, COLFEC and COLERM took the course in the first semester of 2010/211 session and during their last lecture another 500 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among them. Out of the 1000 copies of the questionnaire administered, 920 were retimed representing 92% of the total questionnaire. These were found usable and were used for the study. In addition, the librarians teaching the course were interviewed and their responses also compliment the data gathered for the study.

Discussion and Findings

Demographic Information

Five hundred and seventy (570) were male representing 62% of the respondents while three hundred and fifty (350) were female representing 38% of the total respondents. The data revealed that 690 (75%) respondents were between the ages of 18-25, 220 (24%) were between the ages of 26-40, while 10 (1%) did not revealed their age, this however, showed that majority of the respondents are young adults.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents

S/N	Colleges	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	COLANIM	128	14%
2	COLAMRUD	154	17%
3	COLPLANT	163	17%
4	COLNAS	265	28.8%
5	COLFHEC	85	9.2%
6	COLERM	125	14%
	TOTAL	**920**	**100**

Only six colleges were covered by this study as the colleges of Engineering and College of Veterinary medicine students did not offer the course during the sessions under reviewed. The distribution of the respondents was shown in table 1.

Table 2: Disposition of Students to the Course

SNO	Statements	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	I like the introduction of use of library course	920	100	-	-
2	The introduction of the course has enhance my knowledge of library facilities	920	100	-	-
3	The introduction of the course has enhance my use of library facilities	920	100	-	-
4.	The time of the lecture is okay by me	497	54%	423	46%

All the respondents (100%) affirmed that they like the introduction of use of library as a course and that it had enhanced their knowledge and use of the library. However, 497 (54%) of the total respondents like their lecture time while 423 (46%) respondents do not like the time of the lecture. Those who do not like the lecture time fall into the category of students that were taught in the 2nd semester of 2009/2010 because the lecture time

was fixed for 2-3p.m on Fridays while those that were taught during the first semester of 2010/2011 session had their lecture fixed for 10-11a.m on Tuesdays. Among reasons given by those who do not like the timing of the lecture is that the period (2-3p.m on Friday) is immediately after their farm practical when students are usually worn out and it also coincided with the Juma'at service for the Muslims.

Table 3: Assessment of Teaching Method

S/N	Assessment	No. of respondents	Percentage%
1	Excellent	-	-
2	Good	520	57
3	Fair	365	40
4	Poor	35	3
5	Very poor	-	-
	Total	**920**	**100**

The respondents were asked to assess the method of teaching the course, 520 (57%) respondents stated that the teaching method was good, 365 (40%) respondents felt it was fair enough while 35 (3%) felt it was poor. None stated that it was excellent this showed that there is need to improve on the teaching method of the course to be more beneficial to students. At present the students are been taught by three librarians twice per slot of lhour each, per lecture within 6weeks of lecture time. Within this period, the students are also given .practical classes and assignments by organizing extra hours. This however, seems like a clash program and need to be reviewed to allow for more time.

Furthermore, students were asked to suggest how the teaching of the course can be improved. 704 (76.5%) respondents want the course to be more practical oriented, 570 (61%) want more emphasis to be on library electronic resources and 410 (45%) respondents want more emphasis on research and study skills while 325 (35-3%) want more emphasis on information literacy. Hence to make the course more stimulating to students the aspect on library electronic resources should be expanded to include how to evaluate information resources. But the problem that readily comes to mind is how one can accommodate this, within an hour lecture with a maximum of three times a semester.

Challenges Encountered by the Librarians Teaching the Course

Three librarians with a least a master degree in library science were assigned to handle the course (GNS 203). All the librarians complained that the class was too large for effective teaching, even with the aid of power point projector. They would have preferred the class to be split into smaller manageable groups and the lecture hour to be increase to two hours per lecture. It should however, be noted that these librarians also have their other professional duties and therefore have to combine these with the teaching. Due to the largeness of the classes and lack of time, it is not easy to effectively assess the students for continuous assessment; hence only one or two assignments were given to the students. The total number of students that took the course in 2nd semester was 800 students while those that took the course in 1st semester are 1,998.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This study revealed that despite all odds the use of library course was a welcome development by students at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, as majority of them affirmed that it had enhanced their knowledge and the use of library. However, like any other new scheme, there are rooms for improvement first on the part of lecturers (librarian) and on the part of the university management. To make the use of library course (GNS 203) more meaningful and beneficial to students and to achieve its aim, the following recommendations are necessary for considerations;

1. The time and hours of lecture should be revisited to create room for more practical training and for students to have interactive sessions with their lecturers.

2. The classes should be split into smaller classes and more librarians should be involved in the teaching of the course.

3. More credit should be allotted to the course so that students would appreciate the course more. The present limit allotted to the course sometimes makes students feel that they are putting in more to earn a little.

4. The use of library course should be separated from GNS course and run as a separate course for all the undergraduate students. It should run across different levels so that its impact would be felt and students would also appreciate it long after school as their intellectual capacity would have been enhanced.

5. The course content should be review to reflect students' needs in the aspect of electronic resources modem trends in information literacy.

In conclusion the use of library course has come to stay after a long 'protracted battle'. Though, the teaching of the course still has it teething problems, it is hoped that all these will soon be overcome as the course is still evolving. There is no doubt that the use of library would be beneficial to all students in the long run regardless of their level because students will always need library resources in their academic pursuit to make headways.

References

Badu, E.E (1981). The information seeking habits of graduate students in the University of Ghana. *Education Libraries Journal* 34(2) 35- 39.

Badke, B. (2007). Re: IL programs - separate, embedded or information literacy instruction list. *http://www.ill-l@ala.org.* August 15 (Contribution to a discussion on information literacy curriculum).

Chan, S. (2003). Making information literacy a compulsory subject for undergraduates: The experience of the University of Malaya. Retrieved from http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/081e-Chan.pdf accessed on November 4, 2010

Dadzie, P. S (2009) Information literacy in higher education: overview of initiatives at two Ghana universities. *African Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science.* 19(2) 165-175.

Edem, U. S. and Lawal, 0.0 (1996,). Towards improved user education programme in Nigerian universities libraries. *African Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science ,* 6(1) 31-36.

Noah, A. (2004). *Fundamentals of general studies.* Lagos: Olu-Akin.

Ofulue, H.O. (2010). User Education Programmes in Nigerian University Libraries. Proceedings of Second Professional Submit on Information Science and Technology (PSIST) held at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 403- 510.

Ojedokun, A.A and Lumade, E (2005) the integration of information literacy skill into a credit earning program at the university of Botswana. *African Journal of Library Archival and Information Science* 15(2) 17-124.

Ojiambo, J.B (1988) School Library services in Sub-Saharan African. *International Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship* 3(3) 143-65.

Oluwole, E.R (2008) A comparative study of credit earning information literacy skills courses of three African universities. *Library Philosophy and Practices.* Retrieved from http://www. webages .uidaho.edu/~mbolim/rasakipdf. Accessed on 03 December 2010.

Oyinloye, A.M (2002) Use of the Library The Undergraduate Library Instruction Program in Nigerian Universities. Journal of Education for Library and Information Science. 43(1) 72-78.

Qiu, C and Liu, Yan (2008) Readers Education in Libraries of Universities. *Asian Social Science* 4(5) 110-113. Retrieved from www.ccsenet.org/joumal.html on Jan 12. 2011. University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. University Calendar 2009-2010, 1-6.