

Assessment on the Challenges Encountered by Academic Librarians on Information Literacy Instruction in Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria

Kayode Sunday John Dada^{1,*}, Sadiat Lola Atte²

¹University Library, Federal University of Education, Zaria, Kaduna, NIGERIA.

²Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna, NIGERIA.

ABSTRACT

Aims/Background: This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by Academic Librarians in delivering information literacy instruction in Federal Colleges of Education within the North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. **Methodology:** A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing a Cross-Sectional Survey research method. The study adopted a total enumeration sampling technique, where the entire population of Academic Librarians with teaching responsibilities served as the sample. Data were collected using a self-developed closed-ended questionnaire based on the Association of College and Research Libraries (2015) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education Standards and Julien, Gross, and Latham (2018) Survey of Information Literacy Instruction Practices in U.S. Academic Libraries. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including Frequency Distribution Tables, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. **Results:** The findings identified several challenges encountered by Academic Librarians in teaching information literacy, including insufficient faculty training and support programs, apathy of staff and students toward Information Literacy Programs, inadequate collaboration between librarians and faculty in information literacy activities, poor awareness among Academic Librarians of their roles in information literacy instruction, and inconsistent teaching styles. **Conclusion:** The study recommends increased faculty engagement and collaboration through symposiums, workshops, and seminars to enhance the delivery of information literacy instruction. Faculty-librarian collaboration should be considered a critical component of the methodology to support student learning, as it can significantly improve the effectiveness of information literacy programs and better equip students and faculty with essential skills for success in the information age.

Keywords: Academic Librarians, Federal Colleges of Education, information literacy instruction, Challenges, Nigeria, North-West Geo-Political Zone.

Correspondence:

Kayode Sunday John Dada

University Library, Federal University of Education, Zaria, Kaduna, NIGERIA.

Email: kayodescholar@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Information is a crucial resource across all disciplines and plays a significant role in individuals' lives, supporting their livelihoods and enabling informed decision-making. As the volume of information that individuals encounter daily continues to grow exponentially, it is essential for them to be equipped with the skills to identify and evaluate information effectively. Given the undeniable importance of information for well-being and development, fostering information literacy among users and throughout society is essential. This literacy is a critical

requirement to meet the challenges of the 21st century and stay informed about current trends (Baro and Eze, 2015).

Information Literacy instruction is not new for academic librarianship for decades, which has been used to teach users on the use of resources through bibliographic instruction, one short library sessions, workshops. According to Julien Gross and Latham (2018) information literacy instruction emerged in 1990s from traditional bibliographic instruction, user education as a core activity in academic libraries for professional librarians to teach information literacy instruction to its users. Thus, information literacy instruction refers to the pedagogical practice aimed at helping information users to develop skills needed to be considered information literate.

Information literacy has become an important skill for users due to societal changes that have seen information become a



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valuable commodity, the need for users to act independently, become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and the recognition that information literacy is very essential for effective learning in higher education (Roszkisz, 2024). Paul Zurkowski used the concept in 1974 with the basic principle that individuals require training, techniques and skills for proper utilization of information from different sources towards molding information solutions to their problems (Huang *et al.*, 2020; Bruce, 2017; Uzuegbu, 2014).

However, the American College of Research Libraries (2021) defined Information literacy as a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information from diverse sources and competencies to navigate the complex information landscape and make informed decisions. Information literacy is required in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the large volumes of information available, individuals are faced with multiple information choices for their academic studies, workplace, and personal usage. Information is accessible and available through different sources including libraries, record centers, media, and the Internet. This information comes to individuals in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, reliability. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information possess a large challenge for individuals to make informed decisions in the society.

Statement of the Problem

Information Literacy instruction is becoming increasingly important in a world that is rapidly evolving through the growth and proliferation of technological and information resources. With the vast amount of information available across the globe many library users and non-users believe they are indeed information literate simply because they can navigate and use the internet extensively. Unfortunately, this confidence is often misplaced as they are faced with information overload, data smog, misinformation, information users making it hard to distinguish accurate from inaccurate sources, authenticity, validity and usability of the information resources they discover.

Information literacy as an essential tool equips information users in tertiary institution with the necessary critical thinking skills to locate, evaluate, use information ethically, protection of intellectual property, privacy, and fair representation of information resources. Information literacy skills are useful to all information users, so as to be to do their research, assignment and report successfully. Lecturers and other staff greatly need these critical thinking skills, to enable them carry out their teaching career, support teaching and learning with sound instructional resources. Despite the importance, benefit derived and efforts of Academic librarians in teaching information literacy instruction to information users, a preliminary investigation by the researcher

based on population gap conducted by Baro and Eze (2015), Ilesanmi (2013) and Baro and Zuokemefa, (2011), the researcher discovered that there is a shortage of academic librarians with 21st century expertise in teaching information literacy instruction skills. Some of the existing academic librarians do not use Information Literacy Frameworks, inconsistency in the use of teaching methodologies in alignment with educational objectives, high plagiarized report of student and staff academic assignments, research and projects, and lack of teaching proficiency skills to users on how to evaluate, and utilize these resources for academic and research purposes. This identified shortcomings could limit the quality and effectiveness of information literacy instruction in these Nigeria Federal Colleges of Education.

This identified gap underscores the urgent need for academic librarians who engage in teaching information literacy instruction to empower information users to harness library information resources for academic and professional growth. However, the research has revealed a significant gap in this ideal situation, emphasizing the critical need for academic librarians to fill this void through targeted information literacy instruction.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to find out challenges encountered by Academic Librarians on information literacy instruction in Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Information Literacy Instruction

Information literacy instruction plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills to effectively navigate, evaluate, and use information in today's information-rich society.

According to University of Minnesota (2024), information literacy is defined as “the set of integrated abilities [and knowledge] encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

According to Association of College and Research Libraries (2016) Information literacy is defined as the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. In other words, information literacy involves an understanding of how information is created, accessed, shared, and valued and the abilities and mindset necessary to be able to locate, evaluate, use, and create information sources ethically and effectively (ACRL, 2016).

Emerton (2010), defined Information literacy instruction as a process that involves the pedagogical triangle of practice and model which aids individual reflection of teaching sessions. It also viewed as the moved from designing classes around how to use library resources (source-oriented teaching) to sessions based on the user's needs.

Information literacy instruction is essential for individuals to become critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and responsible participants in a digital world (Bruce, 2017). According to Lloyd (2019), information literacy empowers individuals to identify information needs, locate relevant resources, critically evaluate information, and ethically use and share information. These skills are particularly crucial in the digital age, where the abundance of information and the ease of access pose challenges in discerning accurate and reliable information from misinformation and disinformation. Information literacy is not just the ability to locate an article for a class. It encompasses a variety of information-seeking behavior including recognizing when information is needed, phrasing questions to locate what is needed, evaluating the information, and using what is found ethically and effectively. It is common to all disciplines, learning environments, and levels of education. Information Literacy skills provide students with the tools to think critically about the information they encounter on a daily basis, and it prepares them to be lifelong learners (University of Minnesota, 2024).

Information literacy instruction employs a variety of instructional approaches and strategies to promote learning. Traditional methods include lectures, workshops, and tutorials, which provide foundational knowledge and skills (Koltay and Spiranec, 2017). However, innovative approaches, such as problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning, are gaining popularity for their ability to foster active engagement, critical thinking, and information application (Okafor, Onwuzurike and Okechukwu, 2024). Information literacy instruction is crucial for individuals to navigate the vast amount of information available and make informed decisions. information literacy instruction is a critical component of modern education, equipping individuals with the skills needed to navigate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively (Saidatul, 2014).

To thrive in academic and professional settings, information users need to develop skills that enable them to navigate and critically evaluate information from diverse sources. Explicitly teaching students how to evaluate different information sources is crucial for fostering critical thinking skills. This review explores several strategies that educators can employ to enhance students' ability to use different information sources, including library resources, online databases, scholarly articles, and credible websites.

Baro and Keboh, (2012) stated that the provision of quality information literacy programmes has continued to elude Nigerian universities, as a result of limited space, inadequate support from

parent institutions, especially from institutional management, inadequate staffing and other human resources, lack of suitable facilities, minimal interest from students themselves, disruptions in the academic calendar and the absence of a clear information literacy policy at every level.

Similarly, the study by Anyaoku, Ezeani and Osuigwe (2015) in their study on Information Literacy Practices of Librarians in Universities in South-East, Nigeria reported that the major challenges that face information literacy programmes in Nigeria are lack of information literacy policy/standard, lack of university commitment to the project and lack of computers and other teaching resources.

Challenges encountered during teaching include limited faculty expertise in Information Literacy (IL), the need for additional resources and infrastructure, instructional training and techniques and ensuring consistent IL instruction throughout the program for information users. Institutional support, including faculty development programs and collaborative initiatives, are reported to foster IL integration effectively. Student teachers perceive IL integration positively, emphasizing its relevance to their future teaching practices and students' academic success.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive approach, where data derived through the quantitative methodology. Methodology adopted was descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The population for this study comprises of Seventy-Five (75) academic librarians drawn from the Five (5) Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The study used total enumeration sampling technique to select academic librarians from Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The study used this sampling technique because every member of the population is represented. This in line with Sugiyono (2016). A self-developed closed ended questionnaire of Association of College and Research Libraries (2015) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education Standards and Julien, Gross and Latham (2018) Survey of Information literacy Instruction Practices in U.S Academic Libraries was used to collect data from the respondents. The researcher and Seven (7) Research Assistants who were mainly the staff of the respective libraries studied administered and retrieved the questionnaires from the respondents for a period of three weeks across Seven (7) states comprising of Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara for the study area. This approach was adopted in order to enhance the safety and complete return of the questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Frequency Distribution Tables, Percentage, mean and standard deviation. For descriptive statistics on frequency and percentage distribution tables 60% was used as the benchmark for decision making using SPSS Statistical Package 23rd edition.

RESULTS

Table 1 on the challenges encountered by Academic Librarians on Information Literacy Instruction in Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria for all the 18 items. It was discovered that Insufficient faculty training and support programme, Apathy of staff and students to Information Literacy Programme, Insufficient collaboration between librarians and staff in Information Literacy activities, Poor awareness of Academic Librarians in their roles as Information Literacy Instructions in the College, Inconsistent Teaching Styles were challenges encountered by Academic Librarians in teaching Information Literacy Instruction with over 60% response score.

Whereas, Lack of information resources to support teaching, Resistance to change and Learning (unwillingness to accept innovations in curriculum planning and students learning, Inadequate professional staffing (Human Resources), Disruptions in the academic calendars, Apathy of staff and students to Information Literacy Programme, Absence of information Literacy policies/standard to govern its teaching, Low acceptance of Information Literacy Delivery Approach, Lack of support from College Management and Authorities, Time Constraints

(Limited time to teach), Ambiguity about the Information Literacy Course and discipline, Lack of familiarity with Database, Lack of Evaluation skills, Lack of practical classes for Information Literacy Courses, Lack of flexibility and Review on Information Literacy Module, Lack of adequate instructional methodology on Course, and Inability to match subject relevance with appropriate information Sources were challenges encountered by Academic Librarians in teaching Information Literacy Instruction with less than 60% response scores.

From the mean scores, Insufficient collaboration between librarians and staff in Information Literacy activities had the highest mean of 1.85 with FCE Kano and FCE Katsina that each had 93.8% and 84.0% agreement respectively. Next is Insufficient faculty training and support programmes as this had Second highest mean agreement of 1.811 showing that FCE Gusau and FCE Katsina has the highest representation of 88.9% and 84.6% respectively. In summary, Insufficient collaboration between librarians and staff in Information Literacy activities and Insufficient faculty training and support programme. The study agrees Anyaoku, Anunobi and Eze (2015) who reported that the major challenges that face information literacy programmes in Nigeria are lack of information literacy policy/standard, lack of

Table 1: Challenges encountered by Academic Librarians on Information Literacy Instruction in Federal Colleges of Education in North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

Federal Colleges of Education										
Sl. No.	Challenges Encountered by Academic Librarians on Information Literacy Instruction	FCE Gusau	FCE Kano	FCE Bichi	FCE Katsina	FCE Zaria	FCE Sokoto	Total	\bar{x}	σ
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
1	Insufficient faculty training and support programmes	8	88.9	13	81.3	3	60.0	11	84.6	20
2	Lack of information resources to support teaching	6	66.7	14	87.5	2	40.0	12	92.3	24
3	Resistance to change and learning (unwillingness to accept innovations in curriculum planning and student learning)	2	22.2	16	100	4	80.0	10	76.9	19
4	Inadequate professional staffing (Human Resources)	4	44.4	14	87.5	0	0.0	9	69.2	26
5	Disruptions in the academic calendars	5	55.6	13	81.3	3	60.0	8	61.5	24
6	Apathy of staff and students to Information Literacy Programme	6	66.7	10	62.5	3	60.0	10	76.9	25

Federal Colleges of Education										
Sl. No.	Challenges Encountered by Academic Librarians on Information Literacy Instruction	FCE Gusau	FCE Kano	FCE Bichi	FCE Katsina	FCE Zaria	FCE Sokoto	Total	\bar{x}	σ
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
7	Insufficient collaboration between librarians and staff in Information Literacy activities	5	55.6	15	93.8	3	60.0	11	84.6	24
8	Poor awareness of Academic Librarians in their roles as Information Literacy Instructors in the College	8	88.9	15	93.8	3	60.0	12	92.3	23
9	Absence of Information Literacy policies/ standards to govern its teaching	7	77.8	13	81.3	4	80.0	12	92.3	24
10	Low acceptance of Information Literacy Delivery Approach	6	66.7	13	81.3	2	40.0	10	76.9	25
11	Lack of support from College Management and Authorities	0	0.0	14	87.5	0	0.0	11	84.6	24
12	Time Constraints (Limited time to teach)	7	77.8	12	75.0	3	60.0	9	69.2	20
13	Ambiguity about the Information Literacy Course and discipline	8	88.9	11	68.8	3	60.0	12	92.3	19
14	Lack of familiarity with Database	6	66.7	16	100	0	0.0	12	92.3	21
15	Inconsistent Teaching Styles	8	88.9	14	87.5	4	80.0	10	76.9	22
16	Lack of Evaluation Skills	7	77.8	16	100	4	80.0	10	76.9	21
17	Lack of practical classes for Information Literacy Courses	5	55.6	14	87.5	2	40.0	10	76.9	20
18	Lack of flexibility and review on Information Literacy Module	6	66.7	16	100	3	60.0	9	69.2	19
19	Lack of adequate instructional methodology on Course	6	66.7	16	100	0	0.0	12	92.3	21
20	Inability to match subject relevance with appropriate information sources	7	77.8	14	87.5	3	60.0	11	84.6	21

Source: Field Survey, 2024 Key: Source: Field Survey, 2024 Key: FCE=Federal College of Education, F=frequency, %=Percentage, \bar{x} =Mean, σ =Standard Deviation.

capacity development/training, poor facilities, lack of university commitment to the project and lack of computers and other teaching resources. The findings from the study confirms with the findings of Baro and Keboh, (2012) who reported that academic librarians are faced with challenges of limited space, inadequate support from parent institutions, especially from institutional management, inadequate staffing and other human resources, lack of suitable facilities, minimal interest from students themselves, disruptions in the academic calendar and the absence of a clear information literacy policy at every level.

The findings also confirm with Anunobi and Ukwoma (2016), in their study on information literacy in Nigerian universities, who reported that the underdevelopment of information literacy programs in higher education institutions is attributed to the commitment of key stakeholders including administrators, academics, students and libraries due to lack of essential management commitment, ignorant on the different types of information literacy, lack of willingness of various departments to collaborate for effective development of programs, aversion, to innovative curricula and inadequate technological infrastructure as a hindrance to the growth of effective information literacy programs.

The study is contrary to the findings of Julien (2005) who carried out on 93 schools of library and information Studies, information management, and information system on the range and depth of courses on information literacy instruction who reported that majority of the schools appear to offer no course in information literacy instruction, but the schools have existing courses on topics including instructional strategies, (pedagogy), program planning and implementation, assessing instruction, learning theory, instructional design, basic information literacy concepts, outcomes evaluation, needs assessment and web based instructional strategies. The implication of this finding is that academic librarians who lack formal preparation, instructional training and techniques would impede the full functionality of their teaching role and better service delivery.

The implication of this findings is that challenges encountered by academic librarians during teaching include limited faculty expertise in Information Literacy (IL), lack of additional resources and infrastructure, instructional training and techniques and ensuring consistent IL instruction throughout the program for information users. The promotion of Institutional support, including faculty development programs and collaborative initiatives could foster IL for future teaching practices and students' academic success.

CONCLUSION

The essence of teaching information literacy instruction in Colleges of Education is to equip information users with critical thinking skills to master content, become more self-directed, and understand economic, legal, and social issues surrounding

the use of information. Academic librarians play a pivotal role in developing critical thinking skills among library users, and their teaching responsibility has increased over the past two decades in tandem with socio-demographic, technological, and transformed Higher Education (HE). Information literacy instruction is crucial for individuals to navigate the vast amount of information available and make informed decisions. Information literacy instruction is a critical component of modern education, equipping individuals with the skills needed to navigate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively. They possess a unique combination of knowledge and expertise in information organization, retrieval, and evaluation and users who receive information literacy instruction demonstrate enhanced information-seeking behaviors, increased self-efficacy, and improved abilities to evaluate and use information effectively.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study: The following recommendations were made:

All efforts should be made by the Colleges management through Internal Generated Revenue (IGR) to sponsor Academic Librarian to participate on formal training from the Library Information Science (LIS) Schools Curriculum, professional development workshops on graduate skills in pedagogy, ethical principles, copyright Fair use and Intellectual Property, organization, storing, management of information resources using appropriate techniques, proficiency in instructional planning, understanding learning theories.

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Nigerian Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) through Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to provide sponsorships/ grants, and fellowships for training of academic librarians to attend seminars, workshops and talk shows and online trainings on Reference and research assistance skills, Copyright and intellectual property, Citation and Referencing Skills, to equip them foundational knowledge of teaching information literacy with global standards.

There is need for more faculty engagement/faculty collaboration in the delivery of information literacy through symposium, workshops, seminars and that faculty and librarian collaboration should be considered as a critical component of the methodology used in supporting student learning as this can significantly improve the effectiveness of their information literacy instruction programs and better equip students and faculty with the essential skills for success in the information age.

Academic librarians need to be trained through capacity-building sessions training, seminar, workshops on how to create an

enabling environment through the use of recent information resources to teach and promote critical thinking skills through ethical usage of information effectively.

The need for inclusion of library period in the academic calendar to motivate expose users interest for the ethical usage of different types of resources available through proper acknowledgement of sources, referencing and citation styles to reduce the high level of plagiarism of student academic reports in tertiary institutions.

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