

**THE STATUS OF USER EDUCATION AT  
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL)  
LIBRARY, OMOKU, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study was conducted to examine the user education programme of Federal College of Education (Technical) Library, Omoku Rivers State. A total of two hundred staff and students of the institution were involved in the study. Stratified, proportionate, and simple random sampling techniques were used to determine the sample size of the respondents. Data collected for the study with the help of a structured questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentage. The result showed that the user education program adopted in the college library was effective and has helped benefiting students tremendously to explore and exploit the library resources independently and more effectively. However, it was showed that the user education approaches used was not all embracing as it caters for first year NCE students, 2nd year NCE students and 3rd year students alone, leaving the Pre-NCE students and staff unattended to. The study therefore, concluded that, in order to impact the desired skills to all categories of users, the user education approaches should be redesign to make it all embracing and accommodate the interest of all members of the academic community which it serves.*

**Keywords:** *Status, user education, library, Omoku, Rivers State*

**INTRODUCTION**

That the library is a driving force for the advancement of teaching, learning and research in education is not in doubt. Stakeholders in education understood and recognized this fact. It is therefore not surprising for the National Policy on Education (2004) to describe the library as one of the most important educational services and recommended its establishment in all educational institutions in the country. Interestingly, libraries were established, but inadequately funded. Librarians and other information managers worried by this fact and the devastating effect, poor funding has on the library and its services have repeatedly advocated for better funding of libraries to make it more functional. Adebayo and Sokari (2004) argued that, with proper funding of libraries, a library with a handful of books and other reading materials in its stock today could run into thousands and millions of books in future. While this argument cannot be dismissed without merit, the point remains that, library information resources are for use.

It is pertinent therefore to underscore the fact that, the best stocked

library in the world with the most recent information materials in quality and quantity, whether manually or digitalized with the most recent and expensive information and communication gargets would be of no relevance to modern society if its information resources cannot be explored and exploited by its users. It is not unconnected with this fact that the watchdog of colleges of education in the country, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (1994), directed all libraries within its ambit control to carry out user education as one of the user services. But then, critics have often asked the rationale for such directive. What is user education? What are the benefits of user education? The interest of this paper is to proffer answers to these questions, by evaluating the user education program of Federal College of Education (Technical), Library Omoku, Rivers State.

### **MEANING AND APPROACHES OF USER EDUCATION**

Scholars across the globe have put in effort in getting an appropriate definition and description for the word user education. Sokari (2006) observed that, user education is a notable method in which the library and information managers have used to promote information literacy in the Nigeria academic community. He quoted Mungilim as having defined user education as a process of making library patrons to learn how to make effective and efficient use of the library and information resources. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) defined user education as, instruction in library use aimed at developing the bibliographic skills of library users so that they can make the most effective use of the library and its information resources.

The summary of these definitions and descriptions put user education as a method of instruction with the focus of guiding the library user to acquire the necessary skills to explore and exploit the library resources to a maximum use. To achieve this objective, librarians have devised and adopted various approaches to user education. Mohammed (2002) quoted Buckland as having classified three types (approaches) to user education as:

**Library Orientation:** This comprises of guided tour intended to familiarize students with the physical layout of the library building and location of its resources and services.

**Point to Use Instruction:** This include printed guide, techniques and brochure on how to use bibliographic tools such as video tapes, slides, indexing and abstracting services and other reference tools.

**Teaching of Use of Library:** Comprises of formal teaching of bibliographic and research methods, a credit earning program designed for first year students.

### **BENEFITS OF USER EDUCATION**

The benefits that are derivable from educating the user on the methods of library use are too numerous to recount. The following are just a few of such benefits:

- It helps the user in discovering and developing needed skills and talents to make profitable use in the library.
- Educating the library user on ways and means of meaningful use of the library, stimulate the user interest of the library. Hence, it promotes greater patronage.

When users are educated on proper handling of library materials which form part of user education program, a lot of library materials are saved from wear and tear occasioned by poor handling. This also save fund for the library as money that would have been spent on repair or replacement of damage materials are channeled to other meaningful use.

It adds value to the job of library and information delivery services, as users not only make maximum use of the library. But are placed in a position to locate and retrieve information with ease. Olumeti (1996) also gave the rationale for user education noting that, practical knowledge of the use of library can enable the students not only to maximize the use of the library resources in their school but can also place them in a better position to properly and effectively utilize the resources of other libraries. The Objectives of the study are to:

- access the strength and weakness of the user education programme in the Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku Library, Rivers State.
- find out the efficiency of the user education approach.
- find out whether the library user education programme has enhanced the users skill to effectively use the library.

The following questions were structured to guide the study.

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the user education programme of Federal College Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How effective is the user education approach adopted?
- In which ways have the user education programme enhanced the users' skill to effectively use the library?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey method was used for the study. A structured questionnaire validated by four professional colleagues was used to elicit information from the respondents. The respondents were drawn from a sample of staff and students of Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria. The researcher adopted sampling technique for the study to determine the overall sample size. To do this, Yamanne's (1967) Statistical formula was used to determine appropriate sample size of the population. Based on this formula, a sample size of 200 staff and students of the college was derived. The researcher also conducted oral interview to collect data. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Summary of Responses made on Assessment of User Education Programme

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very effective	30	15%
Effective	150	75%
Fair	-	-
Poor	-	-
Very poor	-	-
Undecided	20	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Filed work, 2010

The result of the analysis in table 1 shows that the user education programme is effective as greater percentage of the population sample maintain that the user education programme of the library is effective and have help students tremendously to exploit library resources maximally. This findings is in agreement with Ojo-Igbiniobe (1991) in a related study has reported that, the students developed a high interest in their academic and social life as a result of the library user education programme.

**Table 2:** Summary of the Responses on Effectiveness of user Education Approach used

Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very effective	-	-
Effective	130	65%
Fair	25	12.5%
Poor	70	35%
Very poor	-	-
Undecided	15	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Filed work, 2010

From table 2, it is observed that 130 respondents indicated positively in favour of the user education approach. While 70 representing 35% of the population sample were on the negative side they contended that the user education approach do not embrace all library users, but limited to students users of the library. Even at that, they contended that the formal instructions on library user education do not embrace all students as the Pre-NCE students where not part of it. Though, this group of respondent were in the minority, their view cannot be totally thrown away as Adebayo and Sokari (2004) in a related study of the institution noted that, emphasis should be placed on the practical aspects of the course during teaching which should also include the Pre-NCE students also to enable them have the catalogue use skill Garbe (2004). In agreement with this view noted that, library instruction program aims at acquainting the users with library skills to enable them access library information resources independently. The idea is excellent and highly welcomed by many institutions of higher leaning, but the procedures used in carrying out this laudable programme have a lot of deficiencies.

**Table 3:** Summary of the Responses on the Effect of user Education Programme on Users

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very high effect	130	65%
High effect	70	35%
Average effect	-	-
Low effect	-	-
Very Low effect	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Filed work, 2010

From the above table 3, the respondents agree that the user education programme has enhanced the users skill in library use 130 respondents representing 65% of the population sample maintain that the users education programme has very positive influence on the user in the use of the library. While 70 respondents representing 35 percent of the population sample indicated that users education programme has high effect on the users in enhancing their use of the library and exploiting the resources of the library. This findings is in line with K/Sauri (2006), submission that...a properly instructed library user retrieves information faster, as he knows why, what, how and where to get any relevant information with minimum delay.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the user education programme mounted by Federal College of Education (Technical) library, Omoku, Rivers State is effective and had enabled students tremendously to explore and exploit the library resources and services more effectively. However, the study also recognizes that, the approaches adopted were not all embracing as they cater for only a segment of the students (NCE Student) leaving the staff members and the Pre-NCE students unattended.

It is recommended that the scope of the user education approaches of the library should be broadened to make it all embracing, so that both staff and Pre-NCE students benefit from the programme since they are all members of the academic community. Besides, the staff, especially the academic staff need the instruction programmes to be able to exploit library resources maximally for teaching and research.

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