

THE INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMME AT NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Information literacy has evolved over the years. Information literacy has gone beyond what is called the “Use of Library” which is basically knowing how to use the library and the resources found within the library. Information literacy skill is now an important skill necessary for every graduate to possess. In order for students to have information literacy skills, it is necessary for the university library to provide a well-functioning information literacy programme. This research examines the information literacy programme in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). It was discovered that the information literacy programme available to students is a course called the “Use of Library GST 104”. The course was analysed using a Qualitative method called template analysis. The themes in the course were mapped out with the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) information literacy model, in order to find out if there are information literacy elements within the course material. It was concluded that there were some information literacy elements found within the course material, However, information literacy model was not used in designing the course material. Hence, it is recommended that an information literacy instruction should be designed and implemented in order to support the students of NOUN.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Information Literacy instructions, Information Literacy Models, Template analysis and National Open University of Nigeria

Introduction

The Library at National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) provides a general course called GST 104 ‘Use of Library’, this is a general course for all departments at the university. This course is written by librarians, and it is compulsory that all students undertake it in their first year at the university.

The course ‘The Use of Library’ includes several modules such as: Types of Library and Services, Research Techniques, Organization of Library Materials, ICT Use in Library and Good Reading Habits/Study Skills. Although, this course is called ‘The Use of Library’, it has few attributes of information literacy (IL). It can be said that this is the programme the university library provides as an IL course to students. Therefore, it is anticipated that by finding out if IL elements are found within this course, and whether the course was developed following the guidelines of any IL model, it will bring to light whether the programme provided by the library is effective at equipping students with IL skills.

Literature Review

The purpose of this research was to find out if the course provided by the library is effective at providing students with IL instructions, but firstly, it is important to define the term ‘IL’ as described in the literature.

The term ‘information literacy’ was first used by Zurkowski in a proposal submitted to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). The proposal suggested that a national programme should be established in order to attain universal information literacy (Jiyane and Onyancha 2010). In his proposal he describes ‘information

literate' as "people trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates" (Jiyane and Onyancha 2010). This definition discusses more about information resources, it indicates that anyone who can make use of information resources effectively in their work without problems, should be called an information literate.

In the 1980s the use of the term 'information literacy' gradually replaced the concepts of user education and library skills (McCaskie2004).McCaskie (2004) stated that the significant events which occurred in the lifespan of the concepts includes the establishment of the American Library Association (ALA), Presidential Committee on the information literacy (PCIL). In highlighting the importance of information literacy, the PCIL made a statement that connected information literacy to the goals of lifelong learning and effective citizenship (Jiyane and Onyancha 2010). After the definition of information literacy by the ALA, other associates and writers of library literature began to define information literacy.

The various definitions of information literacy address learning as a step- by-step process and continuous development in an information society. These definitions included skills such as identifying, locating, evaluating, communicating, and using information in an ethical manner. There have been numerous definitions of the term 'information literacy'. According to Owusu-Ansah (2005) the most acknowledged definition of information literacy was provided by ALA. The ALA defined information literacy as "a set of abilities: recognizing an information need and locating, evaluating, and using the needed information effectively" (American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 2009). This definition highlights the necessary skills and competencies required for a person to be information literate. In an attempt to further clarify the meaning of information literacy, other authors also defined information literacy. A definition similar to the one developed by ALA is that of the Australian and New Zealand information Literacy Framework (ANZIL)(Bundy, 2004), which defines information literacy as an understanding and set of capabilities enabling people to recognise when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. For Webber and Johnson (2003) information literacy is "the adoption of appropriate information behaviour to obtain through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, together with critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society". The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals'(CILIP) definition of information literacy has achieved more widespread acknowledgment. CILIP defines it as "knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner" (CILIP 2004). This definition is the most precise produced so far; this is because, unlike other definitions, it tries to explain the important elements simply. It defines information literacy in simple and plain English (Armstrong et al 2005). CILIP recently produced another definition of information literacy in 2018. CILIP (2018) states that "Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society". This definition applies to all areas of life, which includes education, workplace, health and lifelong learning. This means IL enables people to critically make informed decisions about the information they find, which will enable people participate effectively wherever they find themselves. This definition unlike others above, includes that an information literate person would be able to think critically with any type of information.

There are several similarities between the various definitions of information literacy (Bundy 2004, CILIP 2004). The ALA's definition of information literacy is similar to the ANZIL, CILIP, and Webber and Johnson's (2003) definition of information literacy. These definitions described information literacy as sets of abilities or information behaviour that enables people to recognise, locate, evaluate and use information. However, both the ALA's and ANZIL's definition of information literacy failed to include that information should be communicated in an ethical manner. Whereas both the CILIP and Webber and Johnson specifically addressed the issue surrounding the use of information in an ethical manner. The recent CILIP definition of information literacy adds critical thinking to the definition of information literacy.

Despite the introduction of a definition of information literacy by the ALA, some writers still state that the use of library, Library instruction, user education and bibliographic instructions are also IL.

Library instruction as defined by McAdoo (2012) is usually a workshop organised by the library in order to provide library users with information about library resources and services; and also demonstrate how to use these resources and services efficiently. Bibliographic instruction includes programmes designed by the library to teach users how to locate information effectively; it also includes the organisation of materials in the library and how various tools such as catalogues, indexes and abstracts can be used to locate and find information (ALA 2009). This suggests that library and bibliographic instruction are terms related to information literacy (Lau 2006). However, researchers argue that information literacy is a broader term that encompasses, not just library or bibliographic instruction, but goes beyond the academic environment; it helps to locate, evaluate, organise and use information effectively. It teaches content higher level skills for dealing with information in everyday life.

The course provided by NOUN is mainly based on Library use and that's a smaller version of information literacy as stated above, IL is a much broader term than the others mentioned above. An information literacy model should be used in creating an information literacy course. This is because it guides the librarian on what to include in an IL course.

Models of Information Literacy

With much discussion around the concept and definition of the term 'information literacy', numerous models were created and developed by various information literacy associations and authors.

Information literacy models serve as a guide to librarians in developing information literacy skills in students. There have been numerous models of information literacy (McCaskie 2004). The information literacy models often used in higher institutions include: The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy (ANZIL), the Big6 associates and the SCOUNL Seven Pillars of

The ANZIL model was derived from the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standard for Higher Education (Bundy 2004). The ANZIL model described that an information literate person should be able to:

- *recognise a need for information*
- *determine the extent of information needed*

- *access information efficiently*
- *critically evaluates information and its sources*
- *classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected or generated*
- *incorporate selected information into their knowledge base*
- *use information effectively to learn, create new knowledge, solve problems and make decisions*
- *access and use information ethically and legally*
- *use information and knowledge for participative citizenship and social responsibility*
- *experience information literacy as part of independent learning and lifelong learning (Bundy 2004 p4)*

The ANZIL model of information literacy provides principles and core standards to be followed by information literacy educators; these principles and standards serve as guidance to information literacy educators. They also include learning outcomes, which are expected to be acquired by any individual after going through the information literacy course; as well as assessment guidance for information literacy educators (Bundy 2004).

The ACRL information literacy model is a framework used in assessing an information literate individual (ACRL 2000). The ACRL model indicated that an information literate individual should have the following attributes:

- *determine the extent of information needed*
- *access the needed information effectively and efficiently*
- *evaluate information and its sources critically*
- *incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base*
- *use information efficiently to accomplish a specific purpose*
- *understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally (ACRL 2000)*

These two models above are similar, because they describe information literacy competencies at lower and higher levels (McCaskie 2004). These models describes lower level as; an individual being able to identify keywords, synonyms and other related terms to the information needed, while the higher level is the ability of an individual to be able to create new knowledge and solve problems with the information found (ACRL 2000; Bundy 2004).

The Big6 information literacy model was developed by Eisenberg and Berkow, it has been popular and used in various schools (Markless and Streatfield 2005; Bruce 2003). Bruce (2002) declares that the Big6 model of information literacy deals with students developing a systematic information seeking behaviour. The Big6 model of information literacy is a model that assists people in solving an information related problem (Eisenberg and Berkowitz2001). The Big6 model includes:

- *task definition*

The Information Seeking Strategies at National Open University of Nigeria

- *location and access*
- *use of information*
- *synthesis and evaluation.*

The SCONUL model was developed in the United Kingdom by a working group of information literacy specialist (SCONUL 2011). It has been used in higher institution in the UK since then. A survey was conducted about the perceptions and use of the model by UK

institutions; which thereby brought about the revision of the model (SCONUL 2015). In 2011, the SCONUL model was updated and the new model included different lenses, which included different learning processes. The model was updated in order to expand and explain more clearly the different terms in the model (SCONUL 2015).

The various IL models mentioned above are similar, this is because they explain the necessary attributes a person should have in order to be considered information literate. Although the ANZIL model is similar to other information literacy models; it is different in some aspects, because it is the only model that includes the use of information for participative citizenship and social responsibilities (Bundy 2004). The ACRL and ANZIL models specifically addresses the learning outcomes and assessment that should be included in any information literacy course; making it a more standard model. The models were deliberately chosen because they represent information literacy from different countries. The researcher will be using one of these models to analyse ‘The Use of Library course.

Recommendation

This research examined the course “GST 104 Use of Library” and found elements of IL present. However, the way some of these IL elements were represented within the course material, will not help fully in equipping students with the necessary IL skills. It was also discovered that no IL model was used as a guide in creating the GST 104 course. It is recommended that instead of discussing the definitions of certain terms in the course material, it will be more effective if a practical example is given for better understanding. For example, a module within the course defined plagiarism, instead of giving students the definition of plagiarism, it will be more effective to give them an example of an extract from a plagiarised work. Another example is from the module computer based literature search, the course explained the steps for constructing an effective search strategy with the use of either Boolean operators or truncation, which is a very effective way. A more effective way will be an IL tutorial that shows students screenshots of how to search on a database, so that they can participate and see what search results each search brings. Therefore, this research recommends the creation of an online IL tutorial, that will help students in developing IL skills. This will help improve their critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills.

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