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STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE
OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME: A CASE
STUDY OF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The paper reported the findings of a survey on the students percep-
tion of the library instruction course in Obafemi Awolowo University. The
usefulness, status, content and organisation of the course were examined.
The survey confirmed the usefulness of the course while the course content
and organization needed improvement. About 50 percent of the students felt
that more hours were needed in order to exhaustively treat the topics. Opinion
on its non credit-earning status had a 3:2 ratio in support. About 40 percent of
the respondents would rather have the course to be credit-earning.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known and undeniable that countries will be what their
universities are and that Universities will be what their libraries and their
scientific information and research facilities are. (Lasso de Vega, 1962).
According to Adimorah (1993), the recognition of the importance of infor-
mation in every facet of the National Development Plan of any country is an
index of the operations of the nation's information policy and its research and
development efforts. One area of the national economy where this is pertinent
is in the educational sector especially at the tertiary level.

The library is the heart of an academic community. It coordinates and
supports the process of learning, teaching and research of both students and
staff. The importance of libraries in the promotion of learning was well articu-
lated by Foskett (1959) and Akin-Ojo (1994). For the library to advance knowl-
edge, it must not only provide resources but ensure their effective use.

The little or lack of experience of most fresh students as well as the complexity of most academic libraries make library instruction imperative if the resources are to be effectively used.

In the view of Tucker (1980), the problem of instructing clientele in effective use of library resources had been with librarian for some time. Soyinka (1976) found that there was yet no concensus as to the best approach to instruct users. This can no longer be said to be true as many university libraries if not all now have systematic user education programmes. It has become customary to have library orientation during which new students were addressed, given library guides and were taken on a tour of the library. In addition, many have library instruction programmes for fresh students on how to make effective use of the library resources. This enables them to benefit from the wealth of library resources. The exposure to the variety and wealth of library resources and the competence developed in their exploitation becomes a lifelong skill.

LIB 001 is a user instructional programme designed to acquaint new students with learning facilities and support resources available at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The objective of this study was to examine students' perspective of the Library Instruction Programme (LIB 001). The scope of the study was limited to the Faculty of Agriculture being one of the foundation faculties and having a high student population.

CONCEPT OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The concept of instructing students in the use of libraries and library materials is not peculiar to Obafemi Awolowo University. It is practiced in many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and the world over. This is informed by the library's unique role to advance knowledge, which necessitates not only the provision of information resources but the ensurance of an effective use of the same.

Moss (1986) described the making of a user education film entitled "This is your library" by the staff of King Charles 1st School, Kidderminster. The Carl von Ossietzky State and University Library in Hamburg in 1985 tested the use of Walkman tape cassette as an addition to their user-education program (Rupelt, 1985). Lighzali (1985) reported that due to the explosion of information and the underutilization of information resources by students, information science had to be taught at the university level.

At the Technische Hochschule (Technical University) in Karl-Marx-Stadt 150 training sessions and lectures are provided annually to introduce students to scientific and technical literature (Bocek and Zemmrich, 1985). Similar training were provided for users in Mechnical Engineering Trade School in Czechoslovakia (Kopcova, 1985) and Handelschochschule (Commercial training school) in Leipzig, East Germany, (Adamek, 1985). In Nigeria, the University of Lagos started its library instruction to students in 1971/72

session as a four one-hour lectures and also non-credit earning. The programme was reviewed in 1973/74 as a 2-tier programme designed for the freshmen on one hand and the final year students on the other hand.

Today according to Akin-Ojo (1994), library orientation and instruction in the University of Lagos is an examinable part of the General African Studies (GAS).

At the Federal University of Technology, Akure Library instruction is taught to new students as Information Retrieval (Library) (GNS 104) with one credit earning. (FUTA Calender 1989- 1994).

The practice of instructing students in the use of the library and library materials is carried out in almost if not all College and University libraries in Nigeria. The depth to which it is carried is what differs from one educational institution to the other.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME IN O.A.U.

In Obafemi Awolowo University, the Library instruction programme started in 1972/73 session as part of Course GNS 1, (University of Ife. Annual Report 1980/81). It ran successfully for three years before problems beyond the library led to its suspension in 1975. In a bid to reactivate the course, the Library Committee presented for approval a Senate Paper no. 2049 to Senate in its 169th meeting of 30th June, 1992. Senate approval was carried in Minute 2923 of the Minutes of the same meeting. It was therefore reactivated as Library Instruction Programme (LIB 001) from 1982/83 session with the following objectives.

(a)   To assist students in generally making effective and meaning-
        ful use of the resources of the library.

(b)   To train students in the use of reference and bibliographic tools
        applicable to their subject fields.

(c)   To train students to be able to gain access to information on
        subjects outside their own fields.

It is a compulsory, non-credit earning course taken by all fresh degree students and transfer cases who have not done a similar course in their previous institutions. It has four one-hour lecture hours and two assignments. Attendance at the four lectures and success in the two assignments are the prerequisites for passing the course while the penalty for failure is inability to graduate from the university.

Having run the programme for some time, it is important to evaluate it especially from the beneficiaries view. This survey was therefore carried out to sample students' opinion on the usefulness, content adequacy and the status of the course.

The opinion poll cuts across all students of the Faculty of Agriculture

from Part I to V.

Questionnaires were used to solicit for information from the respondents. Section A dwelt on personal data while section B obtained information on the subject matter asking for a graduation of their opinion, by assigning numbers 4 - 1 in descending order [4 - Srongly agree; 3 - Agree; 2 - Disagree; 1 - Strongly disagree], as the case may be.

DATA ANALYSIS

Out of a total of 300 questionnaires sent out 237 returns were made and analysed representing a 79 percent response. The response was well distributed within the parts and across the departments in the Faculty of Agriculture with the highest from students in Part V 31 percent and the lowest from students in Part 1 5.9 percent. It was understandable that the returns from Part 1 students was low because they were just in the process of going through the course and could not have done more than two lectures. 71 percent of the students passed the course in their Part 1, 23.4 percent in Part II, while only 5.4 percent carried the course for the more than two years.

The analysis of the data was carried out under three headings viz: the usefulness of the course: the course content and organization and the status.
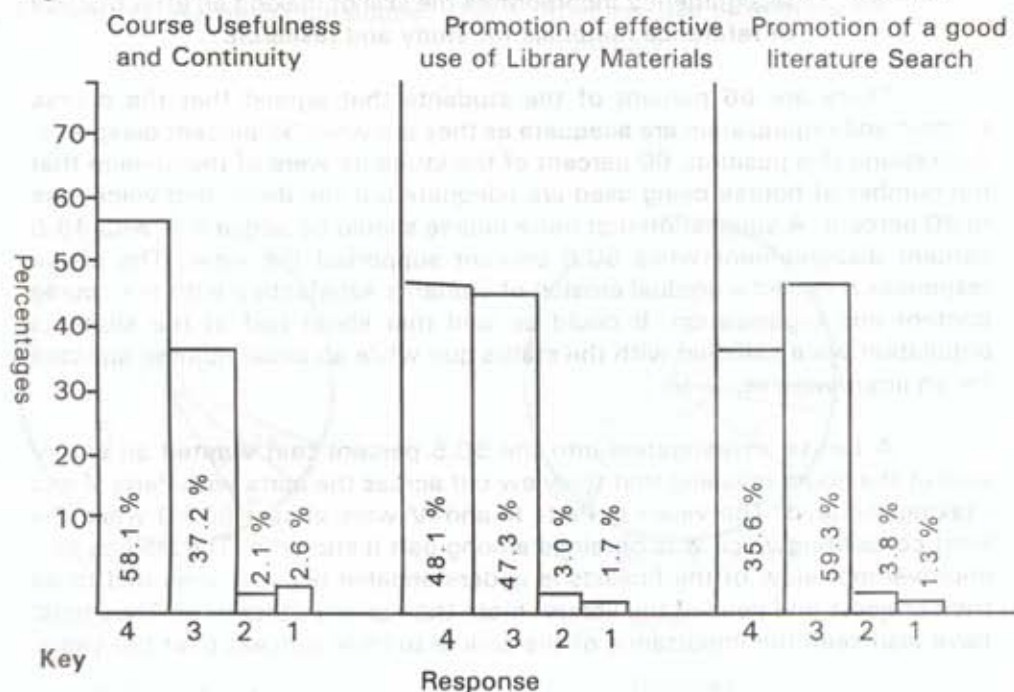
USEFULNESS OF THE COURSE

Information on the usefulness of the course were sourced from three questions, viz:

(i)   LIB 001 is very useful and should be continued;

(ii)   It helps students to make effective use of library materials; and

(iii)   It enables students to prepare a good literature review for their projects/term papers.

Many students, 95.3 percent altogether agreed that the course was very useful and should be continued. Also 95.4 percent of the students were of the opinion that it enabled them to make effective use of library materials. That the course helped students to make a good literature search was accented to by 94.9 percent of the respondents. The usefulness of the library instruction course was thus not in question as shown in the above responses. The details of the responses is shown graphically in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1: *RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE OF USEFULNESS OF COURSE*

Course Usefulness and Continuity   Promotion of effective use of Library Materials   Promotion of a good literature Search

Percentages

58.1 %   37.2 %   2.1 %   2.6 %   48.1 %   47.3 %   3.0 %   1.7 %   35.6 %   59.3 %   3.8 %   1.3 %

Response

Key

4......Strongly Agree

3.......Agree

2.........Disagree

1.........Strongly Disagree

COURSE CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

The views of the respondents on the content and organization of the course were brought out in their responses to above five questions. They are:

(i)   The course content and organization are adequate as they are

(ii)   The number of hours being used are adequate.

(iii)   More hours should be added to allow for a thorough treatment of the topics.

(iv)   Assignment 1 incorporates the skill of making an effective use of the library's catalogue.

(v)   Assignment 2 incorporates the skill of making an effective use of reference materials for study and research.

There are 66 percent of the students that agreed that the course content and organization are adequate as they are while 34 percent disagreed. Buttressing this position, 60 percent of the students were of the opinion that the number of hourse being used are adequate but the dissenting voice rose to 40 percent. A suggestion that more hourse should be added met with 49.6 percent disagreement while 50.5 percent supported the view. The above responses revealed a gradual erosion of students satisfaction with the course content and organization. It could be said that about half of the students population were satisfied with the status quo while an equal number agitated for an improvement.

A further investigation into the 50.5 percent that wanted an extension of the hours revealed that the view cut across the parts with Parts V and I taking the lead. The views in Parts III and IV were almost 50.50 while the least consenting voice was obtained among part II students. The leading pro-improvement view of the finalists is understandable because they had to do their projects and needed the library, more than at any other time. They must have also seen the importance of the course to their success over the years.
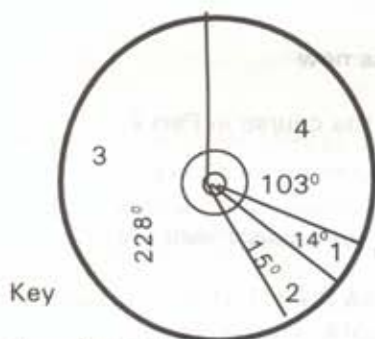
FIG. 2.1   ADDITIONAL HOURS FOR LIB 001

Parts	Agree	Disagree	Total
1	9	5	14
2	20	37	57
3	27	28	55
4	17	18	35
5	45	28	73
Total	118	116	234

Information obtained on the assignments revealed that most of the students agreed that the two assignments gave them the skill to make effective use of the catalogue and the reference materials. This can be seen in figures 3 and 4 below.

Fig 3: Effective use of the catalogue   Fig 4: Effective use of reference materials

Fig 3: Effective use of the catalogue
(pie chart with: 3, 4, 103°, 228°, 14°, 15°, 1, 2)

Fig 4: Effective use of reference materials
(pie chart with: 3, 4, 80°, 253°, 8° 1, 9° 2)

Key

4......Strongly agree

3......Agree

2......Disagree

1.......Strongly disagree

Key

4.....Strongly agree

3......Agree

2.......Disagree

1.......Strongly disagree

In addition, questions were asked about the evil effect of copying and the importance of regular attendance at the lectures. A total of 84.2 percent of the students felt that copying in the assignments jeopardize their chances of acquiring the much needed skill. The importance of taking attendance at the lectures was supported by 82.3 percent of the repondents

STATUS OF THE COURSE

Investigation showed that most of the students prefer the non credit-earning status of the course as 61.5 percent were opposed to the idea of its being credit-earning. However, 38.5 percent of the students were in support of a credit-earning status. There was no significant difference in their opinion as to whether the course should be indicated in their semester results as Passed/ Failed.
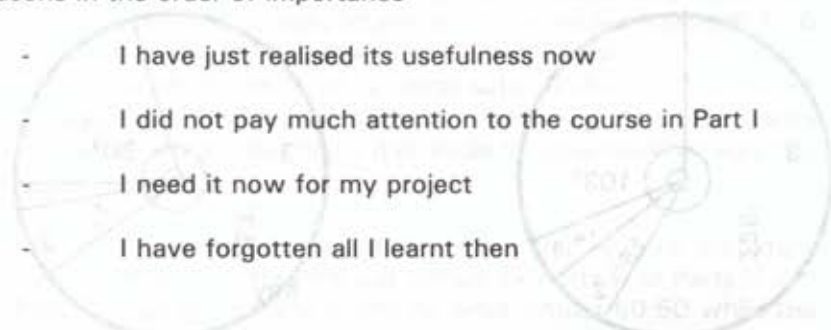
There are 52.2 percent of the students that agreed with the sugges-tion while 47.9 percent were opposed to it.

As regards the timing of the course, 73.6 percent agreed that the course was best offered in Part 1. This opinion was buttressed by the strong

opposition to the suggestion of offering the course in Part II (62.1%) or Part V (76.5%).

Part V students were specifically asked if they would desire to have the course repeated.

There are 45.6 percent the responded affirmatively while 54.4 percent were opposed to the idea. The majority of those who would have the course repeated opted for the repetition of the entire course with the following reasons in the order of importance

-     I have just realised its usefulness now

-     I did not pay much attention to the course in Part I

-     I need it now for my project

-     I have forgotten all I learnt then

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis revealed that the course was undoubtedly very useful to the students and every effort should be made to continue offering it. The adequacy of the course content and orqanization did not however enjoy a unanimous decision as did its usefulness. Though about two thirds of the respondents felt it was adequate, the dissenting voice was significantly high.

It became much more pronounced in the issue adding more hours. The response showed a reversal of opinion as more people felt they needed more hours to enable them benefit much more from the course. There was definitely a discontentment among the students on this issue. Too much knowledge was being compressed into a few hours of lecture. The findings showed that there is need for a reorganisation of the course. Making the course a semester one with fifteen contact hours of lecturers and practicals would give the lectures more room to effectively teach the topics.

The University of Lagos example could also be considered wherein a 2-tier programme was developed to take care of freshmen on one hand and the final year students on the other hand. The yearning of about 50 percent of the finalists to retake the course and the reasons adduced was note worthy. The knowledge acquired on the use of reference books and literature search in their Part I had been virtually forgotten by the time they really needed it in Part V. Most of them ended up going back to their lecturers to ask for guidance. It might be a better idea if this aspect of the course was taught in the penultimate year to equip them for their project/thesis work in the final year.

As regards the status of the course, making it credit-earning would allow for a better appreciation by the students. The response in fact showed that about 40 percent supported the idea. For the dissenting voices it might be a

case of wanting to enjoy the benefits without bearing the responsibilities. These reforms, if introduced, would benefit the students more in terms of developing a lifelong skill in the use of libraries and library materials. The possibility of incorporating the results in students transcripts should be examined and Part V students who wish to renew their knowledge of the course should be encouraged to do so. Similar survey could be conducted in other faculties to corroborate the present findings.

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