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# THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR

By

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## *ABSTRACT*

*The thrust of this paper was to investigate the role the library plays in the teaching and learning process in the University of Calabar. Survey research design was utilised for the study. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection and a sample of 80 respondents was used for the study. Frequency tables and percentages were employed for data analysis. The findings of the study showed that the library plays a significant role in teaching and learning process in the University of Calabar, by providing information resources to both students and lecturers. The study further showed that ICTs such as computers with internet connectivity, electronic databases and CD-ROM databases were available for use by both students and lecturers in the University of Calabar. The findings also showed that students and lecturers face a lot of challenges like lack of relevant information in certain subject area, inadequacy of current information and epileptic power supply in the course of their making use of the library. Based on this, it was recommended among others that academic libraries should be equipped with relevant information resources and also make these resources accessible for both students and lecturers; federal government should provide ICT facilities in libraries with robust internet connectivity for easy retrieval of information.*

**Keywords: Library, Teaching-Learning Process, University.**

## Introduction

The University of Calabar Library evolved from the University of Nigeria, Calabar campus on October 17, 1973 with the initial collection of 2,368 volumes. Presently, the library's total collection stands at 156,957 volumes of books and 16,127 volumes of journals, not to mention theses, United Nations publications, monographs and other periodicals. In addition to this, the University of Calabar library has an e-library with a total of 237 computers with internet connectivity provided by the University of Calabar WIFI. The e-library provides access to electronic resources and these include e-books, online databases, CD-Rom databases and open access journals etc. (Bassey & Inyokwe, 2015).

Libraries, which were initially referred to as storehouses for books and periodicals, have transformed from their historical beginning as places for keeping records of the activities of operations of the business, legal, historical, political and religious bodies, to a far reaching body of information resources, adopting technological innovations like information and communication technologies (ICTs) in service delivery. This has made it possible to store and retrieve information in many different forms and from any location through internet connectivity.

The origin of libraries can be traced to man's effort to keep records of his daily activities in business, politics, religion or cultural events. This led to the creation of records, the need to preserve the records created and how to organize such records for use. This further gave rise to human efforts in the document collection and preservation. The library can be seen as a building or part of a building which contains book, and non-book information resources, with personnel who manage the resources for use. However, the concept is now stretched to include the modern computer and the related networks such as the Internet (Edem & Ofre, 2008). For teaching and learning to reach its full potentials, the library must be equipped with adequate resources for use by academic staff and students alike.

Libraries are part of the information highway that connects people to the world of knowledge. They are created to conserve knowledge, preserve cultural heritage, provide information, serve as centres and foundation of research and recreation. The goal of university education can be seen as the pursuit of knowledge in the broadest possible way. It is common knowledge that quality university education will be elusive without a functional library. This indispensable role has been reflected in many descriptions of the university library as: "the handmaid of scholarship"; "the pivot on which the life of the institution revolves" and "the heart of the institution".

The library shares a common objective with the university to make the learner a knowledgeable personality. It is thus inconceivable to have a university without the modern infrastructure and adequate collections of materials both in print and electronic formats to meet the academic and research goals of the university. Hence the university library is apparently the major infrastructure to support the tripartite functions of the university, which are teaching, learning and research. The academic library is recognized as an essential resource centre which no student or lecturer can afford to dispense with, if he or she wants to attain required academic goals (Edem & Ofre, 2008).

Teaching includes activities of educating or instructing, activities that impart knowledge or skills while learning is the cognitive process of acquiring skill or knowledge. There will be no education without teaching. Teaching is a direct process for sustaining learning and for enabling learners to gain the required knowledge needed for them to become important citizens in the economy. The quality of education that takes place in the classroom is of utmost importance in an academic setting. Teaching and learning will be impossible without a functional library in the institution. Teaching and learning processes are not only vital to education excellence and to the success of learning experiences but also to equity of education quality and of learning.

Academic staff in higher institutions of learning contribute to the realization of the broad objectives of the university which is "teaching, research and community development". Academic staff give academic direction to students and extend the frontiers of knowledge through research and publication. As a result of this, lecturers' have dire need for information in all its formats. Information needs of students and lecturers' is vital to libraries because libraries have a role to play in helping lecturers meet their information needs.

Education, on the other hand, is the gradual process of acquiring knowledge. It is also knowledge acquired by learning and instruction, which can lead to individual development as a result of experiences acquired over the years during the process of teaching. While the library plays the desirable part of the information source and its dissemination and protects knowledge and its storage, e**ducation cannot exist on its own without a library support, and a library is redundant if it cannot pass on education.** In terms of educational benefits, the academic library should be fully and comprehensively equipped to meet the varying demands of lecturers and students for their references and research on all subjects that form part of their curriculum.

**Statement of the problem**

The inherent problem of this study is the ensuing poor quality of some teaching and learning observed in the University of Calabar. Observation shows that some teachers are not applying the relevant teaching methods to educate the students, while many students do not have adequate facilities for effective learning. The question therefore arises, what role can the library play in teaching and learning process in the University of Calabar to ameliorate these problems.

**Purpose of the study**

1. Library intervention factors in the teaching and learning process in the University of Calabar.

2. To find out if ICTs are integrated in the University of Calabar library to aid teaching and learning

3. To determine the problems encountered by students and lecturers in library use in the University of Calabar library.

**Literature Review**

According to Ukachi (2010) "libraries exist because of the presence of information users. The reason for the existence of libraries is to cater and satisfy the varying information needs of these users. The knowledge of the information needs of users is a precondition to efficient delivery of library and information services to them". This is to say that the ability to ascertain what actually they need will enhance the provision of services that will satisfy the user's needs, especially in this era of information explosion. Libraries in Nigeria should embrace periodic user study as one of the strategies of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

The library contributes to the attainment of the broad objectives of the university: "teaching, learning and research". Lecturers give guidance to students academically to broaden their understanding through research and publication. This makes lecturers need for information unavoidable. Much of this information is acquired, processed, and disseminated through the university library which has been variously described as "the heart of the institution" (Aloh 1988), "a place where books and users interact together for the transmission of civilization and cultivation of human beings" (Adelabu 1973) in Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008), and "the most important resource in the pursuit of the general goals and objectives of the institution of higher learning" (Nwosu, 2000).

In a survey of selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it was found that periodicals and journals are the predominant information materials used by academic staff (Jam, 1992) in (Nnadozie, & Nnadozie, 2008). The broad use of periodicals by lecturers is as a result of the current and up-to-date information provided by these publications. Most lecturers in Nigerian universities have unmet information needs for their teaching and research purposes. This is in disagreement with Baker (2004), who believes that there is an increasing accessibility of information for expert and career undertakings. Baker further stated that the information gap is being addressed; however, Whittaker (1997) and Popoola (2001) opined that availability of information resources and services does not automatically translate to information accessibility and use.

Consequent upon the information explosion recently experienced, information materials are now presented in various formats, printed and electronic formats. Furthermore, the relevance of electronic information resources over the printed counterpart cannot be over-emphasized. Online information resources are often faster to consult than printed resources, especially when searching with hindsight. When searching the internet for information resources, it is possible to search multiple files at the same, which is not possible with printed materials. Also electronic information resources are always up-to-date as they are updated regularly than their printed counterparts. Academic libraries should expand their materials acquisition to include electronic resources; they should concentrate less on the acquisition of printed resources. This means that, all information service providers must recognize their work in the twofold nature of the inclusive environment to develop the nature of teaching and learning process in our universities (Ray & Day, 1998) in (Ukachi, 2010).

Shokeen and Kushik (2002) studied "information seeking behaviour of social scientists working in the universities located in Haryana". They reported most of the social scientists visit the library daily, the first preferred method of searching the required information by the social scientists followed by searching through indexing and abstracting periodicals, and citations in articles respectively. The social scientists use current journals followed by books. Cothey (2002) examined "the information seeking behaviour of 206 college students using the World Wide Web (www) during a 10-month period as a means to suggesting how the general population uses the web". It was found out that "World Wide Web users have become more inactive and more eclectic as they become more experienced using the Web". It was also found out that "they use less querying techniques; however their Web usage was more sporadic, which might suggest greater selectivity".

Information seeking behaviour of researchers has been the center of investigation within the library and information science community for years (Meho & Tibbo, 2003). Appreciating the information-seeking behaviour of lecturers has enormous importance not only to libraries, which spend substantial amount purchasing and finding tools for literature search, but also to publishers, who invest in technology to make their online journals available.

## Methodology

Survey research design was used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire design to elicit information from the respondents. A random sample of 35 lecturers and 45 students, both of which are regular library users was used for the study. A total number of 80 questionnaires were distributed, but only 77 (34 from lecturers and 43 from students) were retrieved and used for the study. The validity of the instrument was properly ascertained by three educational research experts.

## Results and Discussions

**Table 1: Status of Respondents**

| S/N | Status | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Professors | 3 | 3.89% |
| 2 | Associate Professors | 3 | 3.89% |
| 3 | Senior Lecturers | 5 | 6.50% |
| 4 | Lecturer I | 6 | 7.80% |
| 5 | Lecturer II | 7 | 9.09% |
| 6 | Assistant Lecturer | 6 | 7.80% |
| 7 | Graduate Assistants | 4 | 5.19% |
| 8 | Students | 43 | 55.84% |
| | **Total** | **77** | **100%** |

Analysis in table 1 shows that 3 of the respondents representing 3.89% were professors, while 3 respondents also representing 3.89% were associate professors and 5 respondents representing 6.50% were senior lecturers. The analysis further revealed that 6 respondents representing 7.80% were in the rank of lecturer I, while 7 respondents representing 9.09% were in the rank of lecturer II, and 6 respondents representing 7.80% were assistant lecturers. Furthermore, 4 of the respondents representing 5.19% were graduate assistants all of whom took part in the study. Also 43 representing 55.74% of undergraduate students participated in the study because undergraduate students use more of the library in order to consult information resources in their different subject areas for research, assignment, and to complement lecture notes.

**Table 2: Library intervention factors in the teaching/learning processes**

| S/N | Statement | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Provision of relevant information in subject area | 10 | 12.99% |
| 2 | Provision of c urrent information resources | 18 | 23.38% |
| 3 | Provision of a stand -by generating plant | 21 | 27.27% |
| 4 | Training and re-training of staff | 6 | 7.79% |
| 5 | Provision of relevant information technologies | 15 | 19.48% |
| 6 | Provision of adequate reading spaces | 7 | 9.09% |
| | **Total** | **77** | **100%** |

As shown in Table 2 above, the role the library plays in teaching/learning process were highlighted. Twenty one (27.27%) of the respondents agreed that there is a stand-by generating plant in case of power failure to give proper vision in the traditional library and access to computers in the electronic library. Eighteen respondents representing 23.38% agreed that there was current information in the library to meet with current trends in education. Ten respondents representing 12.99% agreed that relevant information materials in subject area was available while 15 respondents representing 19.48% were of the opinion that relevant information technologies are provided to aid information search. Six representing 7.79% of the respondents agreed that staff were receiving adequate training while 7 respondents representing 9.09% were of the opinion that there was provision of adequate reading spaces.

**Table 3: Integration of ICTs in the library to aid teaching/learning**

| S/N | Statement | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Availability of computers | 25 | 32.47% |
| 2 | Internet connectivity | 20 | 25.97% |
| 3 | Availability of electronic databases | 17 | 22.08% |
| 4 | Availability of CD-ROM databases | 15 | 19.48% |
| 5 | Scanning and Printing facilities | 0 | 0% |
| | **Total** | **77** | **100%** |

Table 3 was meant to elicit data on whether ICT facilities were available for use by students and lecturers in the library. Twenty five representing

32.47% of the respondents agreed that computers were available and 20 respondents representing 25.97% agreed that there was internet connectivity. Online databases (22.08%) and CD-ROM databases (19.48%) were also available but surprisingly scanning and printing facilities were totally absent.

**Table 4: Problems encountered by lecturers and students in library use**

| S/N | Problems | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lack of relevant information in certain subject area | 12 | 15.58% |
| 2 | Inadequacy of current information | 18 | 23.38% |
| 3 | Erratic power supply | 20 | 25.97% |
| 4 | Incompetent staff | 10 | 12.99% |
| 5 | Lack of robust internet connectivity | 6 | 7.79% |
| 6 | Inadequate reading spaces | 8 | 10.39% |
| 7 | Inability to locate relevant information resources | 3 | 3.90% |
| | **Total** | **77** | **100%** |

Analysis in Table 4 shows that the major problem encountered in the use of the library was erratic power supply 25.97% followed by inadequacy of current information 23.38% and lack of relevant information in certain subject areas 15.58%. Other problems include incompetent staff 12.99%, lack of robust internet connection 7.79%, inadequate reading spaces 10.39% and inability to locate relevant information resources 3.90%.

## Discussion

The finding in table 2 shows that the library plays the role of providing relevant information in different subject areas, provides current information resources, provides a standby generating plant in case of power failure and provides relevant information technologies for access to electronic information resources. The finding further showed that provision of reading spaces and training and re-training of staff were inadequate.

Finding in table 3 on whether ICTs were integrated in the library to aid teaching and learning revealed that computers, internet connectivity, electronic databases and CD-ROM databases were available. But surprisingly, scanning and printing facilities were totally absent. On the problems encountered by lecturers and students in library use, the finding showed that there was the problem of erratic power supply, inadequacy of current information, incompetent staff, and lack of relevant information in

certain subject areas. Other problems included inadequate reading spaces, lack of robust internet connection and inability to locate relevant information resources.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

The findings of this study showed that the library plays a significant role in teaching/learning process in the University of Calabar, by providing information resources to both students and lecturers. The study further showed that ICTs such as computers with internet connectivity, electronic databases and CD-ROM databases were available for use by both students and lecturers in the University of Calabar.

The problems encountered by lecturers and students in library use were also highlighted. The major problems included erratic power supply, inadequacy of current information and incompetent staff. Other problems included lack of robust internet connection, inadequate reading spaces and inability to locate relevant information resources. Based on the findings, it was recommended that;

a. Academic libraries should be equipped with current and relevant information resources and also endeavour to make these resources accessible for both students and lecturers.
b. Library staff should regularly be sent for training and retraining to keep up with new trends in the field of librarianship.
c. Federal Government should provide ICT facilities in libraries with robust internet connectivity for easy retrieval of information.

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