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EVALUATING THE USE OF POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, OFFA, LIBRARY, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

Polytechnic libraries play pivotal roles in the sustenance and advancement of the academic activities of their parent institutions. They bridge the gap between the vast information resources available in different disciplines and polytechnics through their services. This article evaluates the use of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria focusing on the Federal Polytechnic Offa library, Kwara State, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 250 respondents from 1000 registered library users; while 230 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved representing a response rate of 92%. The analysis of data was based on frequency counts, percentages, mean score and confidence interval. Findings revealed that textbooks, journals, reference materials and newspaper/magazines are the mostly utilised information resources in the library and are consulted frequently. Most respondents used the library to prepare for examinations while Internet services and photocopy services are the mostly utilised library services. Factors like insufficient information resources, inadequate awareness of the available information resources and inability of users to utilize the electronic information resources on their own hinder the effective usage of the library information resources. Recommendations were made to improve the use of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria.

Keywords: Polytechnic libraries, Use, Information resources, Federal Polytechnic Offa library

Introduction

The relevance of libraries in the Nigerian educational system cannot be overemphasized. Library is associated with education and education is a societal instrument of change which consequently, affects the social, political, economic, scientific and technological changes (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). Academic libraries serve as the fulcrum which the intellectual activities of tertiary institutions hinge on. Tertiary education will be incomplete and largely defective without the existence of academic libraries stocked with relevant information resources and manned by competent professionals. Academic library is a strong educational force which helps every undergraduate student to fulfill his or her obligation and to achieve self-development (Dibua, 2000). Through their services, academic libraries help tertiary institutions to attain their objectives of training the manpower required for the development of nations. Polytechnic libraries are among the academic libraries which contribute immensely to the development of Nigeria.

Polytechnic libraries are repositories of information and educational resources consciously acquired, preserved and made available for the use of the members of polytechnic

institutions. They represent the polytechnic's sole instrument capable of infecting the totality of knowledge to their clients (Ogbodo, 2011). The essence of polytechnic libraries is to support and enrich polytechnic education by catering for the diverse information needs of the students and staff of polytechnics. The fundamental objective of polytechnic education is the training of professional skill workers who are suppose to constitute manpower to man (Abdulsalami & Salami, 2013). Hence, the services offered by polytechnic libraries are tailored towards the needs of their clientele who comprise students, lecturers, technologists and administrative staff of the institutions. Omekwu and Eruvwe (2014) stated that the services rendered in polytechnic libraries keeps widening to include acquisition of books and other media, reference services, serials control, cataloguing and classification and then making them available to information seekers. Polytechnic libraries ensure this by selecting and acquiring information materials in accordance with their collection development policies.

Polytechnic libraries, unarguably, remain an inseparable part of polytechnics setup which provides adequate information required to sustain and promote the intellectual activities of such institutions. Ita (1980) opined that the objectives of the polytechnic library are inevitably tied up with the objectives of its parent institution since the library is but a unit of the polytechnic. Polytechnic libraries act as the cohesive force which binds the academic activities of polytechnics. According to Nwalo (2001), the polytechnic library has the primary objective of providing literature support for the entire academic, research and extension programmes of the parent institutions. They serve as an extension of teaching and learning activities in polytechnics by providing conducive environment for personal development and access to wide range of educational resources required for higher academic achievement. Hence, polytechnic education is incomplete without the existence of functional polytechnic libraries.

Statement of the Problem

Polytechnics in Nigeria are established with the aim of training and providing the middle level manpower for the different sectors of the Nigerian economy. The Nigerian polytechnic libraries are crucial to the attainment of these lofty objectives saddled on their parent institutions. They serve as a vital link to the realization of these objectives through their services. It is, however, disheartening that some polytechnic libraries have not been performing optimally in assisting their parent institutions to bridge the technological gap plaguing the country's drive to technological breakthrough. The services offered by these polytechnic libraries are inadequate

and ineffective in the face of the responsibility entrusted on their parent institutions. This ugly trend constitutes a serious threat to the attainment of the objectives of polytechnics in Nigeria because library users, who represent an integral part of the polytechnic set up are not adequately catered for. Therefore, this study evaluates the use of polytechnic library in Nigeria using the Federal Polytechnic, Offa library, as a case study.

Historical Background of the Federal Polytechnic Offa and its Library

The Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State was established with a decree in 1992 to offer National Diploma and Higher National Diploma programmes in engineering, management studies, applied sciences and humanities. Since its inception, the polytechnic has produced numerous outstanding students in different areas of human endeavours and this account for the reason why it was tagged as the fastest growing polytechnic in Nigeria. Due to its innovation and enormous contribution to research, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation identified the polytechnic as an important partner in eradicating poverty in Africa through the Sweet Potato for bread and other confectioneries. Currently, the polytechnic has six schools which coordinate the academic activities of the different departments of the institutions and several administrative units which offer support services to the institution.

The Federal Polytechnic Offa library, named after Late Williams Adedoyin, was established in 1992 at the Mini Campus of the institution. Presently, the polytechnic has two libraries; one at the Mini Campus and one at the permanent site of the institution. The polytechnic libraries was set up to provide adequate information services to the polytechnic community which consists of students, lecturers, technologists and administrative staff of the six schools and the various administrative units of the polytechnics in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs. There are four major sections in the libraries: administrative section, reader services section which consists of circulation section, reference section and reserve book section; technical services section which encompasses the cataloguing and classification unit, serials unit and reprography unit as well as the e-library section.

Both Libraries have e-libraries sections with several laptops and desktops for both staff and students' use which became fully operational in 2012. The libraries are rich in current literature with 19,218 volumes of books, reference materials and different journals in engineering, sciences, applied sciences, social sciences, environmental management, humanities and other interdisciplinary fields of study. In addition, the libraries provide to users a range of

Information and Communication Technologies necessary for retrieving information quickly from both immediate and remote databases. The e-library units of the libraries has over 50 fully-networked computers with a Proliant server connected to the Internet on C-band VSAT and it has electronic information resources such as EbscoHost, E-Granary, Elsevier, Centro Books and Science Direct which are made available to users at no cost for their research activities. Other equipment at the library include four network printers, barcode readers, scanners, over head projectors, display screen, public address system and other audiovisual resources.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to evaluate the use of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria focusing on the Federal Polytechnic Offa library in Kwara State. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- i. examine the types of information resources mostly utilised in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library;
- ii. ascertain the frequency of use of information resources in the Polytechnic library;
- iii. investigate the purposes for the use of information resources in the Polytechnic library;
- iv. ascertain the library services mostly utilised in the Polytechnic library;
- v. find out the challenges facing the use of the Polytechnic library; and
- vi. proffer solutions to the challenges facing the use of the Polytechnic library.

Research Questions

This study provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the types of information resources mostly utilised in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library?
2. What is the frequency of use of information resources in the Polytechnic library?
3. What are the purposes for the use of information resources in the Polytechnic library?
4. What is the library services mostly utilised in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library?
5. What are the challenges facing the use of the Federal Polytechnic Offa library?
6. What are the solutions to the challenges facing the use of the Polytechnic library?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis guided the conduct of the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_0 = The services offered in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library are not effective to users' needs.

Literature Review

There is a plethora of literature on the relevance of libraries to academic institutions. According to Anunobi and Okoye (2008), a well established library is essential for any academic institution. A well stocked and organized library is a pride of any educational institution (Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi, 2011). The academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of educational institutions in producing high quality graduates into the labour market depend largely on the quality of information resources available in their libraries (Ugboma & Edewor, 2012). Academic libraries are therefore expected to serve as viable platforms for the advancement of teaching, learning, and research activities in their parent institutions through the provision of relevant information resources and adequate services. The purpose of establishing polytechnic libraries will be defeated if users do not derive maximum satisfaction from their stock of information resources and services offered to them.

Owing to the fact libraries users have varying information needs, there is a need for polytechnic libraries to provide a nexus between their users and the relevant information resources and services in order to be effective. The effectiveness of libraries has often been measured by the volume of library materials available to clients, the amount of use of services and resources, and the apparent or quantified satisfaction of clients (Simmonds & Andaleeb, 2001). Osaghale (2008) opined that library services must create a balance between specific research and information needs and a usable collection of information materials to meet the needs of the institution's academic programmes. Igben (1993) noted that for a library to be most functional, the services it renders should correspond closely with the needs of its users.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study population comprises 1000 registered library users out of which 250 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument used.

The analysis of data collected was based on frequency counts, percentages, mean score and confidence interval.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents across the Polytechnic

S/N	Category of library users	Number of questionnaire administered	Number of questionnaire returned
1	Students	200	191
2	Staff	50	39
	Total	250	230

A total number of 250 copies of questionnaire was administered, 230 copies were returned and found valid for analysis representing a response rate of 92%.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

S/N	Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	102	44
2	Female	128	56
	Total	230	100

The table above shows that there are more female (56%) than male (44%). This implies that female use the Federal Polytechnic Offa library more than male.

Table 3: Types of Information Resources mostly Utilised by the Respondents

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

S/N	Information resources	SA/A	SD/D	Total
1	Textbooks	223(97%)	7(3%)	230(100%)
2	Journals	182(79%)	48(21%)	230(100%)
3	Reference materials	150(65%)	80(35%)	230(100%)
4	Newspapers/ magazines	219(95%)	11(5%)	230(100%)
5	Project reports	184(80%)	46(20%)	230(100%)
6	e-books	85(37%)	145(63%)	230(100%)
7	Online Databases	69(30%)	161(70%)	230(100%)
8	Audio-visual resources	80(35%)	150(65%)	230(100%)

Table 3 reveals the types of information resources mostly utilised in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library. It shows that 223 (97%) and 182 (79%) of the respondents used textbooks and journals respectively, 150 (65%) utilised reference materials, while 219 (95%) and

184 (80%) respondents expressed that they consult newspapers/magazines and project reports accordingly. However, the table revealed that 145 (63%) and 161 (70%) respondents do not use e-books and online databases respectively while 150 (65%) of the respondents stated that they do not use audio-visual resources of the library.

Table 4: Frequency of Utilisation of the Information Resources in the Library

S/N	Period	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Every 3 months	Annually	Never
1	Textbooks	40 (17%)	106 (46%)	61 (27%)	19 (8%)	4 (2%)	-
2	Journals	24 (10%)	83 (36%)	45 (20%)	30 (13%)	22 (10%)	26 (11%)
3	Reference materials	12 (5%)	66 (29%)	112 (49%)	23 (10%)	10 (4%)	7 (3%)
4	Newspapers/magazines	115 (50%)	34 (15%)	57 (25%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4 (2%)
5	Project reports	20 (9%)	23 (10%)	67 (29%)	107 (47%)	10 (4%)	3 (1%)
6	e-books	2 (1%)	12 (5%)	23 (10%)	48 (21%)	56 (24%)	89 (39%)
7	Online databases	3 (1%)	25 (11%)	47 (20%)	112 (49%)	32 (14%)	11 (5%)
8	Audio-visual resources	2 (1%)	13 (6%)	23 (10%)	35 (15%)	10 (4%)	147 (64%)

Table 4 presents the frequency of utilisation of information resources in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library. Figures from the table depict that most of the respondents used textbooks (46%) and journals (36%) on weekly basis, reference materials (49%) on monthly basis while half of the respondents (50%) read newspapers/magazines on daily basis. However, most of the respondents (47%) consulted project reports every three month while majority of them (39%) have never used e-books. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) used online databases every three months while majority of them (64%) have never used audio-visual resources of the library.

Table 5: Purpose for the Use of Information Resources by the Respondents

S/N	Purposes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	To borrow books	23	10
2	Read library books	44	19
3	Prepare for examinations	136	59
4	Research activities	21	9
5	Recreational purposes	6	3
	Total	230	100

The table above shows the purposes for the utilisation of information resources in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library. A total number of 23 (10%) respondents came to the library to borrow books, 44 (19%) respondents used the library to read books while 136 (59%) respondents utilised the library in order to prepare for examinations. Furthermore, 21 (9%) respondents used the library for research activities while 6 (3%) respondents utilised the library for recreational purposes.

Table 6: Library Services mostly Utilised by the Respondents

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

S/N	Library Services	SA/A	SD/D	Total
1	Lending of books	83 (36%)	147(64%)	230(100%)
2	Reference services	48(21%)	182(79)	230(100%)
3	User education	71(31%)	159(69%)	230(100%)
4	Current awareness services	83(36%)	147(64%)	230(100%)
5	Research support services	55(24%)	175(76%)	230(100%)
6	Selective dissemination of information	74(32%)	156(68%)	230(100%)
7	Displays and exhibitions	48(21%)	182(79%)	230(100%)
8	Internet services	164(71%)	66(29%)	230(100%)
9	Photocopy services	201(87%)	29(13%)	230(100%)

Table 6 depicts the library services mostly utilised in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library. Library services such as lending of books (64%), reference services (79%), research support services (76%) and displays and exhibitions (79%) are not utilised by most of the

respondents. Some of the respondents utilised current awareness services (36%) and selective dissemination of information (32%) respectively. However, a vast majority of the respondents utilised Internet services (71%) and photocopy services (87%) in the library.

Table 7: Challenges facing the use of the Polytechnic Library
Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

S/N	Statements	SA/A	SD/D
1	The library has insufficient books and other information resources	133 (58%)	97 (42%)
2	I am not aware of the available library information resources	80 (35%)	150 (65%)
3	The library facilities are inadequate and this discourage me from using the library	60 (26%)	170 (74%)
4	The library staff do not attend to me on time	84 (37%)	146 (63%)
5	I find it difficult to use the library's electronic information resources on my own	161 (70%)	69 (30%)

The table above illustrates the challenges facing the use of the Federal Polytechnic Offa library. More than half of the respondents (58%) stated that the library has insufficient books and other information resources while some (35%) claimed that they were not aware of the available library information resources. Some respondents (26%) noted that the facilities in the library are inadequate and that discouraged them from using the library while others (37%) stated that the library staff do not attend to them on time. Furthermore, majority of the respondents (70%) expressed that they find it difficult to use the library's electronic information resources on their own.

Table 8: Solutions to the Challenges*Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree*

S/N	Statements	SA/A	SD/D
1	The library should acquire more books and other relevant information resources to further cater for my information needs	161 (70%)	69 (30%)
2	The library should further sensitize its users on the available information resources and services through current awareness services	182 (79%)	48 (21%)
3	Adequate facilities should be provided for the library	156 (68%)	74 (32%)
4	The library should further train its users on the usage of electronic information resources	212 (92%)	18 (8%)
5	The library staff should improve on its services to cater for the diverse information needs of its users	143 (62%)	87 (38%)

Table 8 shows the solutions to the challenges facing the use of Federal Polytechnic Offa library. Most of the respondents (70%) stated that the library should acquire more books and other relevant information resources to further cater for their needs while others (79%) proposed that there is a need for the library to further sensitize its users on the available information resources and services. Some respondents (68%) stated that adequate facilities should be provided for the library. A vast majority of the respondents (92%) acknowledged the need for the library to further train its users on the usage of electronic information resources while some respondents (62%) expressed that the library staff should improve on their services to cater for the diverse information needs of its users.

Test of Research Hypothesis

H_0 = The services offered in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library are not effective to users' needs

Key: HE= Highly Effective, E = Effective, I = Ineffective, HI = Highly Ineffective

S/N	Library Services	HE (4)	E (3)	I (2)	HI (1)
1	Lending of books	40	27	8	0
2	Reference services	16	24	10	1
3	User education	40	24	16	0
4	Current awareness services	28	27	4	0
5	Research support services	8	42	22	1
6	Selective dissemination of information	36	30	12	0
7	Displays and exhibitions	20	21	30	1
8	Internet services	12	45	36	1

9	Photocopy services	48	57	2	0
	Total	248	297	140	4

$$\bar{x} \pm z_{1-\alpha/2} \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{N}}$$

Where

$$\bar{x} = 172.25, \sigma = 129.93, z_{1-\alpha/2} = 1.96, N = 230$$

$$172 \pm 1.96 \frac{129.93}{\sqrt{230}} = 172 \pm 16.792$$

$$(155.21, 188.792)$$

Interpretation

The constructed confidence interval above gave us the proof to reject the null hypothesis because the mean obtained ($\bar{x} = 172.25$) lies between 155.21 and 188.792 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we conclude that the services offered in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library are effective to users' needs.

Discussion of Findings

This study shows that female use the polytechnic library more than male. This is in accordance with the findings of Abosede and Ibikunle (2011) who reported that there are more female users in the Lagos Polytechnic library than male users. Most of the respondents consult textbooks, journals and reference materials. This conforms to the findings of Hammed and Osunrinade (2010) as well as Agboola (2009) who noted that undergraduate students prefer to use text books in their study. This finding is also similar to the studies of Dillon and Hahn (2002), and Sathe, Grady and Guise (2002) who expressed that 65% and 75% of the users respectively read print journal frequently. On the frequency of use of information resources in the library, most users utilise textbooks, journals, reference materials and newspaper/magazines on daily, weekly and monthly basis respectively.

This is in line with the views of Ugah (2007); Igbeka and Ola (2010) who posited that students frequently used textbooks, journals, reference materials and newspapers/magazines. Newspapers/magazines are the most frequently consulted information resources of the library and this is in consonance with the findings of Bankole and Babalola (2011) who reported, in their study, that one third of the respondents read library newspapers daily. Most of the

respondents (59%) utilised the library in order to prepare for examinations which is in tandem with finding of Yusuf and Iwu (2010) who observed in their statistical study that 88% of the students in Covenant University visited the library to read for examination.

On the library services mostly utilised, a vast majority of the respondents utilised Internet services (71%) and photocopy services (87%) in the library. This agrees with the findings of Awolaye, Siyanbola & Oladipo (2008) and Buhari (2013) who reported high usage of Internet services among users of academic libraries in Nigeria as well as the findings of Aina (2004) who submitted that having access to photocopying facilities in the library will reduce journal pilfering and mutilation of library materials. Concerning the challenges facing the use of the library, more than half of the respondents (58%) stated that the library has insufficient books and other information resources, some (35%) claimed that they were not aware of the available library information resources while majority of the respondents (70%) expressed that they find it difficult to use the library's electronic information resources on their own.

Most of the respondents (70%) expressed the need for the library to acquire more information resources to cater for the diverse information needs of its users. Majority of the respondents (79%) proposed that the library should further sensitize its users on the available information resources and services through current awareness services. This was supported by Nwalo (2003) who posited that current awareness services are provided to ensure maximum exposure and utilisation of the library's information resources. Some respondents (68%) stated that adequate facilities should be provided for the library which is in tandem with the findings of Issa et al (NA). A vast majority of the respondents (92%) acknowledged the need for the library to further train its users on the usage of electronic information resources which is in consonance with the views of Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo and Okello-Obura (2013) who stressed the need for training and sensitization on the usefulness of electronic resources to students. The test of research hypothesis formulated for the study shows that the services offered in the Federal Polytechnic Offa library are effective to users' needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings show that Nigerian polytechnic libraries provide relevant information resources and services to cater for the diverse needs of their clients. To ensure this, information resources in different formats are made available to the users while library services which are crucial to their academic pursuits are also provided to them accordingly. Though the library clients utilised the information resources and services of the library to a large extent, there is a low level of audio-visual resources utilisation in the library while library services such as reference services, research support services as well as displays and exhibitions are not utilised optimally. Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. Polytechnic libraries should further implement current awareness services to improve the level of awareness of their clients on the available information resources and services.
2. There is an urgent need for polytechnic libraries to train their clients on the usage of audio-visual resources and other electronic information resources of the library.
3. The services offered in the Nigerian polytechnic libraries should be improved upon to further enhance teaching, learning and research activities of the institution.
4. The funding to polytechnic libraries should be increased in order to enable them acquire more relevant information resources to meet the rising needs of their clients in the most expedient manner.
5. Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria should form library consortia in order to facilitate resource sharing and effective service delivery to their clients.

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