

# Effective Teaching and Learning :

A Handbook for  
Educators in Nigerian Universities

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First Published in 2018 by FUNAI Press, Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo Ebonyi State.

FUNAI Press is part of the Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

ISBN: 978-978-8506-02-7

Printed and bound in Nigeria by FUNAI Press Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo PMB 1010, Ebonyi State

In association with Keny & Brothers.

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## Chapter 7

### **Situating Information Literacy Instructional Programmes in Nigerian Universities**

*Kingsley Igwe, Abdulwahab Issa, Abdulsalam Salman and Kamal Omopupa*

#### **Introduction**

The pattern of education and training globally is undergoing rapid changes, especially with the emerging sophisticated developments and application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the Internet, and other digital media. Additionally, electronic enablers such as e-learning platforms, open access initiatives, open educational resources and mobile online open courses are contributing to the changes. Thus, accessibility and use of information, ideas, innovations, knowledge and their practical applications are now given priority in all learning climes for overall human and societal development. Meanwhile, as noted by Nwokocha (2017), books, information and libraries represent a triangle of societal development. Books and information in this context imply all forms of information resources and knowledge assets of man, both print and electronic versions; whereas libraries (i.e. traditional, automated, electronic, digital and virtual libraries) refer to information-based agencies for organizing, managing and facilitating access to diverse information for human use. However, unhindered access and use of information and knowledge is desirable, given the fact that it will accelerate innovations and creativity, thereby promoting development (Aina, 2013); and possession of information literacy competence is central to the entire process.

In the present information and knowledge-driven economy, one of the key attributes expected from university graduates is the possession of information literacy competence. Information Literacy (IL) connotes the ability to use information resources from various sources for making decisions and solving problems. The IL competence (hence, ILC) enables individuals to identify their information needs; locate, retrieve, critically evaluate, synthesize and use information resources ethically; and communicate the results. This set of competence becomes imperative considering that the learning process is now increasingly based on the capacity to access and use information with knowledge resources, and to apply them in problem solving in different areas of human endeavour. Presently, IL drives the learning process with focus on learning to learn, learning to transform information into new knowledge and new knowledge into applications (Ojedokun, 2007). Learners now take the initiative to define their learning needs, formulate goals, identify needed learning resources, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate the results (Brage & Svensson, 2011).

The central avenue through which students are expected to acquire ILC is through IL instructional programme. Librarians in Nigerian universities have been delivering the micro aspect of such programme, tagged 'use of library' as a compulsory course, to enable students

acquire library-use skills. Unfortunately, such a course is neither holistic nor achieves the expected learning outcome at imparting information for literate individuals. This is in consideration of the fact that empirical studies have shown that students in Nigerian universities have poor ILC (e.g. Igwe & Oguntayo, 2015; Onuoha & Molokwu, 2016; Igwe, 2017). This is not desirable, because poor ILC, no doubt, impedes academic pursuits, hampers acquisition of knowledge, retards academic performance, impedes lifelong learning capability and cripples research and development. It also thwarts access to jobs, affects performance at work places and hinders exploration and development of viable entrepreneurial opportunities among university graduates in Nigeria. Therefore, the present nature of IL programme in the form of 'use of library' course requires rebranding and repackaging, and placing it in the mainstream of education and training in Nigerian universities for producing graduates that possess high ILC. This is the basis of the chapter, which is sub-divided into conceptual analysis of IL, imperative of ILC and IL programmes, nature of IL programmes, strategies of situating IL programme in the mainstream of university education and possible challenges as well as proffered solutions.

### Conceptual Analysis of Information Literacy

The concept of Information Literacy (IL) was coined in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski, the then president of the Information Industry Association of USA, in a proposal submitted to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). He recommended that a national programme be established to achieve universal IL. According to Zurkowski, people trained in the application of information resources for their work can be called information literates because they have learnt the techniques and skills of utilizing wide range of information sources for providing information-based solutions to their problems (Zhang, Majid & Foo, 2010; Uribe-Tirado & Munoz, 2012).

Being a self-empowering ability, IL enables all classes of individuals in the society to seek, access, analyse, translate, transform information and create knowledge to address challenges, solve problems, achieve personal, social, occupational, as well as learning goals for the improvement of quality of life (Asamoah-Hassan, 2007). It is an essential set of competence through which individuals recognize their information needs, locate and retrieve information, evaluate the quality of retrieved sources, use and synthesise information from various sources, and then apply same for the creation of knowledge and its subsequent communication. These competences are utilitarian and for survival in all aspects of a person's life (Mohktar & Majid, 2008), in addition to various areas of engagement of man.

Individuals such as scientists, lecturers, librarians, teachers, students, administrators, civil servants, and the like with ILC often apply them in identifying, accessing, evaluating, synthesising and using information resources responsibly for carrying out their duties and addressing their information-related challenges. These ILCs, as noted by Weiner (2013), Attama and Igwe, are applicable to countless life decisions, which cut across academic, political, health, business and financial, agricultural along with media dimensions. Thus, it is

in that direction that Doyle (1994) articulates the overall attributes of an individual who possesses ILC or an information literate person as one, who:

- i) recognizes that accurate information is the basis for rational decision making;
- ii) recognizes the need for information;
- iii) formulates questions based on information needs;
- iv) identifies potential sources of information;
- v) develops successful information search strategies;
- vi) accesses print, digital and other associated information sources;
- vii) evaluates information critically and thoroughly;
- viii) organises information resources accordingly for practical applications;
- ix) integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge; as well as
- x) synthesizes and uses information in critical thinking and problem-solving.

The implication of the submission above is that an information literate individual like a student should successfully complete a complex problem-solving process, requiring him or her to define the need for information, determine suitable information search strategy, locate the needed information resources, assess the information resources found. He should also be able to interpret and communicate the information, as well as evaluate conclusions in view of the identified original problem. Such an individual is expected to be a competent self and independent learner, who actively engages in the world of ideas, confidently solves problems, knows what is relevant information, uses digital tools to access information and communicate same. This should be able to operate comfortably in situations where there are multiple answers or no answers, have high standards for academic work, uses information ethically and creates quality products (Tella, 2015). Such an information literate student, therefore, should be a passionate reader, a critical thinker, a creative individual, a learner with keen interest, an organised investigator, an effective communicator, a responsible and skilled user of information and communication tools (Taylor, 2006). Unfortunately, as revealed in the literature, students in Nigerian universities, and by extension, other tertiary institutions have poor ILC, largely attributed to the nature and pattern of IL programmes offered in the universities.

### **Imperative of Information Literacy Competence and Information Literacy Programmes**

According to the University of Texas at Austin (2013), the explosion of online resources demands that ILC be given urgent attention and priority, most especially in the teaching and learning process. The explosions together with the abundance of information resources can make the research engagement process more difficult, challenging and complicated. In fact, there are various vanity press publications dominating the online information landscape; thus, the easiest information resource to find is not certified and also not reliable, thereby making ILC more important, relevant and demanding in the society. ILCs are important for students' academic work and other personal engagements. In different fields of learning,

frequent changes are occurring, the greater aspects of knowledge acquired by students during their university days have a likelihood of becoming outdated, as there would be recent and emerging developments. A student that is information literate is a lifelong learner, possessing the abilities and skills of accessing and critically evaluating information and knowledge resources, most especially on contemporary issues and developments in his/her field of study. In an information and knowledge-dominated economy, students need ILC to succeed in their different endeavours. It could be in the area of engaging in marketing research for products and services, sales advertisement and promotions, conducting feasibility studies for viable projects and programmes, and addressing challenges with their areas of specializations; all these require availability, accessibility, evaluation and utilization of accurate, current and reliable information.

ILCs also enrich students' personal and civic lives. For instance, students require ILCs to apply for and be part of the government, e.g. taking advantage of e-government services, participating in electoral processes, making informed personal health care decisions, providing reliable and factual health-related information for their families, and managing their finances via application of financial literacy skills (University of Texas at Austin, 2013). ILC also enables active participation of students and by extension the youths, in agricultural practices for production of improved yields of crops, livestock, and other products. Similarly, the Oregon State University Libraries (2013) identifies the imperatives of ILCs to undergraduate students as they engage in academic activities. Thus, students need ILC to understand research as a cycle of steps with process of discovery through using information, developing ideas, participating in intellectual discourses and conversations, contextualizing their own ideas and acknowledging ideas from other sources. Key ILC that university students, especially the graduating class, require for academic and other problem-solving purposes include:

- i. **Recognising information needs** - The recognition and identification of information needs is the first step required for addressing information-related challenge. When information is needed, which is mostly for problem-solving purpose, the desire to locate, find, retrieve, use and apply it becomes activated. Thus, information literate students recognize gaps in their knowledge level. With such knowledge in mind, they seek out information resources via many sources and databases to fill those gaps. Such students are aware of the variety of information sources that are available to them, understand how the sources operate, and apply the principles of information ethics.
- ii. **Finding appropriate information**- When information needs are identified, the next step is to move towards finding requisite and reliable information that will address the needs. The information literate students know that different kinds of information sources can be retrieved in different ways and that there are a variety of information accessibility tools to apply in the process. Likewise, such students find information easily because they know how information and knowledge databases are organized

and how information retrieval tools work as well as how to apply result-oriented information search strategies.

- iii. ***Learning from accessed information.*** Having gathered information, information literate students do analyse and assess the information sources they have retrieved, choose the appropriate information sources that would address their needs, and be able to integrate the information from various sources into their own knowledge base for the development of ideas and contribution to knowledge.
- iv. ***Using information accordingly.*** Finding information and critically analysing same are required before utilization. Using information implies putting the accessed and evaluated information resources into actual use for solving problems, through ethical process and efficient means. Information literate students consider their purpose, their message, the resources available to them, and the needs of their intended audience to organize and communicate their ideas and information responsibly in line with acceptable standards. Furthermore, such students showcase where their personal ideas fit in and integrate information sources into their work, via quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing appropriately and ethically (Oregon State University Libraries, 2013).

There are on-going efforts by individuals and organisations across the globe to project IL in higher education. There are also key international information-based associations that are championing the course of IL. They include the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) of the American Library Association (ALA); the joint effort of Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy, and Committee of Australian University Librarians (ANZIIL & CAUL); the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) UK; and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), UK. These organisations from different continents have formulated different IL frameworks, competency standards, performance indicators and learning outcomes, which can be adopted and applied in the implementation of IL programmes across the world. The activities and programmes of other organizations like United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL) USA are not left out. For instance, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) made a case for IL as key skill for the information society and as part of the basic human right of lifelong learning. The Prague Declaration of 2003 in Czech Republic and Alexandria Proclamation of 2005 in Egypt included concrete emphasis on IL. Attending nations urged governments and international organisations to develop policies and programmes for the support and promotion of IL, inclusion of IL in all policy issues, as well as the recognition of IL as requirement for the accreditation of all education and training programmes (Dadzie, 2009).

Similarly, the Information for All Programme (IFAP) of UNESCO, describes IL as one of its priority areas, noting that it is necessary and essential to communicate and promote IL. It includes it in the curriculum at all levels of education, and encourage partnerships between

teachers and librarians for advancing the course of IL and inculcating them in students. Furthermore, the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) recognizes the importance of ILC as a strategic tool for development, and therefore places responsibility on universities, which are the major sources of human resource development to empower and produce graduates that are information literate (Ojedokun & Lumande, 2005). There is no doubt, therefore, that the activities of the afore-mentioned international organisations underscore the importance and essence of ILC for the global community and specifically for the Nigerian society.

Several reports have also shown the relevance of ILC in various activities and engagements of man, especially in the present society. This relevance of IL for productive participation cuts across all individuals in the society, including teachers, civil servants, security agents, all information users and students. For employees, ILC enables access to recent, up-to-date, reliable and authoritative information for effective work execution, thereby adapting to changes that require unhindered access to information (Mohktah & Majid, 2008). In addition, Zhang, Majid and Foo (2010) note that ILCs are forerunners to conducting effective and efficient environmental scanning activities in organisations by employees. Such information literate employees are dynamic and always capable of adding value to the organisations where they work. ILC facilitates access to career opportunities. In other words, employability and job opportunities are based largely on graduates who can demonstrate these ILCs, thereby making employers recognize the value of IL as determinants of success in the information and knowledge economy. To this end, ILC development is not only beneficial to students while in school, but also prepares them for successful entry into the workforce, for either career opportunities or the development of viable business opportunities.

Furthermore, ILC is not just focused on library-use skills, nor is it relevant only in academic institutions; rather, it is a world-wide priority for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that is extensively required, adopted, applied and practised in governments, businesses, corporate establishments, non-governmental organizations, and other sectors of the global economy. This is most especially in areas of knowledge management and applications, which is strategic in every business organisations for effective, result-driven practices and actualization of competitive advantage. To citizens, ILC enables effective information analysis and appropriate utilization for addressing identified needs. Miller and Neyer (2016) justify ILC as a facilitator of ethical practice in professions, using nursing as a reference point, as reflected in the field's curriculum. The study by Madu and Dike (2012) as well as Okiki and Mabawonku (2013) show that the ILC of university lecturers has significant and strong relationship with their increased research productivity. Otunla (2013) added that lecturers' ILC leads to active engagement in computer-mediated professional development, which is a contemporary trend in academics and an indication of digital scholarship adoption. IL instructions improve students' research and scientific writing skills (Bury, 2011; Thompson & Blankinship, 2015). The possession of ILC facilitates independent learning, and creates greater responsibility towards students' learning, which in turn, would help them to become self-motivated learners and thinkers, who are creative, analytical and

ethical in information seeking, retrieving and use (Mohktah & Majid, 2008; Ukachi, 2015). Several learning outcomes, such as academic performance, active participation and quality academic engagements, and graduate employability are linked to ILC (Rockman, 2004; Gardner & Koch, 2007; Soleymani, 2014). Therefore, the importance of acquiring ILC multiplies students' learning chances and opportunities, by using various information sources to expand their knowledge base, ask informed questions, and sharpen their critical thinking skills for further self-development.

## **Nature of Information Literacy Programmes**

The expectations of employers in the knowledge-driven economy are that graduating students from universities should be information literate. Unfortunately, feedback from employers that recruited graduates that lack ILC formed the rationale for making IL instructional programmes compulsory for all students in universities (Ojedokun & Lumande, 2005; Bury, 2011; Popoola & Okiki, 2013). Thus, IL programmes are instructional avenues for developing ILC of undergraduate students, thereby enabling universities to produce information literate graduates that will be relevant and productive in all sectors of the economy. IL programme is a contemporary term that includes bibliographic instruction, library instruction, use of library, library-user education, and library research instruction that are taught to library users, like undergraduate students, by librarians so as to enable them acquire ILC. Streatfield and Markless (2008) submit that IL programme cuts across education and training mechanisms geared towards facilitating the manipulation and use of information for learning, teaching and researching in universities. IL programme can also be seen as policies, standards and strategies formulated and executed by universities, either through or in collaboration with librarians, for the delivery of IL instructions, inculcation of ILC in students, continuous evaluation and sustenance of the programme.

Historically, librarians have been tasked and associated with bibliographic instructions and other user education programmes to students with the aim of inculcating ILCs in them. The nature of such IL instructional programme differs from one institution to another, depending on their articulation and guiding principles. The nature of IL programmes has expanded greatly in scope from its antecedents as user education or use of library course, with emphasis on accessing and using library tools, such as indexes, catalogues and classification schemes, and associated retrieval aids, to comprehensive sets of skills and abilities with wider applications for solving problems (Shenton, 2009). In other words, the concept of user education or use of library course underwent an evolutionary process and metamorphosed into a more holistic and acceptable one tagged IL programme or IL instructional programme (Skov & Skoerbak, 2003; Bavakutty & Nasirudheen, 2008). This is to accommodate the aggregate of competences required by students for effective utilisation of information resources, achievement of success in their academic pursuits, realization of their educational goals and promotion of lifelong learning. The implication is that IL programme had overtaken the former concepts due to the influence of globalisation, exponential growth of all forms of e-publications on the web, and the shift in the information behaviour of users to

the online environment. It therefore demands multi-skilled competence for active engagement and participation.

The delivery of IL programmes involves two basic approaches – compartmentalized and distributed (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2003; Bell, 2008; Trail and Hadley, 2010). In the compartmentalized or separate curriculum model, students enrol in a course dedicated to the development of their ILC. Compartmentalized courses are taught by librarians, without collaborations from lecturers, and include for credit IL modules usually based at academic libraries. Badke (2008) argues that IL is crucial to a full university education, and that students need specific training to be able to navigate the vast quantity and complexity of information, to be able to conduct research, and should be credited for doing so. On the other hand, the distributed approach of delivering IL programme includes course-integrated instructions, where IL is integrated into courses across various disciplines. It could be in some courses or spread throughout the students' academic career in all the courses of study. According to Bell (2008), the distributed approach of inculcating IL skills allows students to understand IL in the context of their subjects, and does not give academics the option to relinquish the responsibility of teaching IL to librarians. Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2003) claims that this approach allows students to understand the importance of IL within their fields of study, provides avenue for broader and higher-level research opportunities, and engages faculty members by making them real partners in IL instructions. However, faculty-librarian collaboration for IL delivery has been found to be a herculean task that lacks cooperation especially from the angle of teaching faculty, which exhibit apathy, resentment and outright rejection in the process (Kiodo & Msuya, 2005; McGuinness, 2006).

There are also other factors that make such collaboration difficult. They are lack of time from lecturers' teaching hours resulting to reluctance to share their classroom, faculty members' lack of awareness of librarians' work and academic role, differences in academic culture of librarians and lecturers, faculty members' lack of IL training during their own education, and lecturers level of IL skills (McGuinness, 2006; Stubbings & Franklin, 2006; Badke, 2008). On the debate as to whether stand-alone credit-bearing or embedded is the best way for librarians to advance and inculcate IL in higher education students, however, there is no one right way for IL to be taught (Smale, 2010). This implies that IL programmes can be for-credit as stand-alone course, taught by librarians. It can also be embedded in another course and collaboratively taught by librarians and teaching faculty. Whichever way, the ultimate is to impart the requisite ILC to the students, so as to enable them become critical and ethical users of information resources.

### **Situating Information Literacy Programmes in the Mainstream of University Education**

Having provided a conceptual analysis of IL, the imperatives of ILC and IL programmes, as well as the nature of IL programmes, there is a need for workable strategies on how IL programmes should be organized, implemented and managed, so that the associated benefits

are fully exploited in Nigerian universities. Most importantly, it appears that the present 'use of library' course or library-use instruction in Nigerian university system is no longer achieving the desired result, considering the series of scholarly findings that revealed that the students have poor ILC. This may be connected with the submission of Badke (2008) that attribute IL instructions to teaching students on how to use a library (i.e. use of library) course is as short-sighted as assuming that driving a car requires that a person knows how to step on a gas pedal. Contrarily, IL instructions are more elaborate and comprehensive for acquisition of the IL skills and competences. Therefore, viable methods of engaging and instructing students to become information literate and lifelong learners should be explored (Igwe, 2017; Omeluzor, Akibu, Dika & Ukangwa, 2017). Thus, situating IL programmes in the mainstream of education and training in Nigerian universities will require implementation of the following:

- First, the entire content of GST 121 course, titled "Use of Library, Study Skills and ICT" in the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) which is compulsory for all undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities should be reviewed and replaced with contemporary issues that connote ILC, that are directly relevant to education and training needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, the title of the course should be changed to "Information Literacy I"; and another advanced aspect of the course should be developed and tagged "Information Literacy II", which is to be offered at either second semester of 300 level or first semester of 400 level in the universities..
- Second, Nigerian universities should adopt and use web-based IL instructional approach (or at least blended learning method) for inculcating IL skills in students. This is imperative because students of today are digital natives, and will be pleased to learn faster and acquire the requisite ILC, if ICTs and other e-learning platforms are adopted and used in the process.
- Third, for all postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities, there should be a compulsory course titled "Advanced Information Literacy". This will complement other compulsory postgraduate courses such as Advanced Research Methods and Statistics. Meanwhile, this course on advanced IL is of essence considering that many students admitted for postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities lack knowledge of ethical issues associated with using information sources (information ethics), and cannot engage in information synthesis. They also lack the capacity to cite and reference information resources according to specific documentation styles, engage in plagiarism, including unintentional plagiarism, and generally have poor ILC. The postgraduate students need to be properly guided on the techniques, which is part of the mission of IL programmes.
- Fourth, the successful implementation of IL programmes in Nigerian universities will require the establishment of a directorate tagged, Centre for IL Education and Training (CILET). This centre could be strategically placed under the Vice