Information Seeking: The Case of Academic Staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City

[1]Anthony Oboite Solomon, CLN, [2]Queenneth Onwuesi, CLN

[1]Federal College of Education (Technical) Library, Ekiadolor, Benin City, Edo State
[2]Hallmark University Library, Ijebu-Itele, Ogun State
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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The article investigated the information seeking behaviour of academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical), Ekiadolor, with particular focus on the access tools, information sources and search strategies used.

Methodology: Descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study, with an online questionnaire as the research instrument.

Findings: The study revealed that academic staff of the Federal College of Education (Technical) are active information seekers, in a bid to meeting their information needs as they relate to their work. They mostly use the internet and the library to access information, consulting journals/periodicals, reference materials, dictionaries and the internet when seeking for information.

Recommendation: Academic libraries should be subscribed to e-databases, and staff trained on the usage; academic libraries should be provided with the different types of information sources, staff should be trained on how to use OPAC.

Key Words: Information seeking, Access tools, Information sources, Search strategies, Academic staff

INTRODUCTION

Information in the 21st century is as an economic resource. It is a foundation for competitive advantage. No wonder Entsua-Mensah, et. al, (2022), notes that information is the main ingredient possessed by the developed nations that the developing nations lack. Information is a critical resource in the operation and management of organizations. Information is very important to every aspect of today's information society or human being. It is particularly important to academic staff of a technically inclined College of Education that seeks to produce teachers to man the Technical Colleges in order to produce technicians who can drive the economy; and produce entrepreneurs who can fend for themselves in the industry, outside the classrooms.

To effectively seek and utilize information, information literacy is an essential pre-requisite. Paul Zurkowski (a German and the then President of Information Industry Association) in 1974 first used the concept 'Information Literacy''. To him, information literacy was described as the ability to use library research tools and materials (Kelly, 2013; Kirinic, 2012). However, with many modifications as to the definition of the concept, the American Library Association (ALA, 1989) came up to state that an information literate is one who must be able to recognize when information is needed, and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively, the information that is needed. Information literacy would largely influence the information seeking behaviour of any individual.

Information seeking behaviour would mean many things to many people. To Pareek and Rana (2013), it entails the process of information acquiring, using and implementing information. Information seeking behaviour is also seen as the activities, whether actively or passively undertaken, to identify and satisfy a perceived or felt need (Olalekan, et. al, 2015). With advancement in information and communications technologies (ICTs), and with the knowledge of the fact that these ICTs are indispensable, it will be expected that in seeking information, academic staff should be able to manipulate these ICTs to give the desired information to meet an information need. Thus, information seeking is a kind of communication behaviour, which for Bhattacharjee, et. al (2014), may be influenced by many factors: persons, working environment, or zeal to resolve an abnormality.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Information is new knowledge capable of changing the action of the people exposed to it. For academic staffs who train students, it can never be overemphasized how they seek information in order to update their knowledge and pass same across to their students. A society that is not information literate cannot talk about good governance, growth or development. But how can the society be information literate if academic staffs do not seek the right information, using the right access tools as well as the right sources and search strategies?

Studies relating to information seeking behaviour abound in their number. However, it has been found that studies relating to the academic staffs of Colleges of Education (Technical) are very almost non-existent and no similar study has been carried out in Edo State, Nigeria to the best of the researchers' knowledge. This is the gap the research seeks to fill. Therefore, this study aims to examine the information seeking behaviour of academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to identify the:

i. information access tools used by academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City;

ii. information sources used by academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City;

iii. search strategies used by academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information seeking behaviour is a broad term encompassing the way individuals articulate their information needs, seek, evaluate, select and use information. Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence. It is the purposive seeking and searching for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. Pareek and Rana (2013) averred that in the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a library or other information systems), or with computer-based systems (such as databases or web). Bhattacharjee, et. al (2014) showed that varied sources abound for different purposes, thus making it difficult to maintain support for the idea of a single model of information channel or access tools. The working culture of the individual needing information, the importance placed on getting it, the facilities available for seeking it, their knowledge about these facilities, the judgement of their values, the probability of getting what is wanted, are the factors that may affect information seeking behaviour.

When taking steps to satisfy a felt need, the activity may be actively or passively undertaken, thus, information seeking is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need. The concept of information needs and information seeking behaviour has been a major issue of study in academic environment especially in the developing countries. Thus, the diverse methods used in meeting such needs (Okonoko, et. al, 2021; Olalekan, et. al, 2015). Their study revealed that many people seek information for general awareness, preparation for reading and for research.

Information seeking can be described as an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. (Bright, et. al, 2022). According to a research by Pareek and Rana (2013), information seeking behaviour is the process of information acquisition, using and implementing information. Ogunbodede and Oniovosa (2019) sees information seeking behaviour as a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally use this information to satisfy his/her information needs. Bhattacharjee et al. (2014) sees information seeking behaviour as involving personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are been sought, and the way and sources with which needed information is been sought. For them, information seeking behaviour is a special case of problem solving, it includes recognizing and interpreting the information problem, establishing a plan of search, conducting the search, evaluating the results, and if necessary, repeating through the process again. The research revealed that:

i. Awareness should be created on the type of sources, their importance and usefulness for getting information.

ii. Use of non-book materials, CD-ROMs, database for bibliographical searches should be encouraged and improved.

iii. Use of electronic resources should be encouraged.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a total enumeration technique since the population of the respondents was small and manageable. The population is given below:

Table 1: Population of the Study

SN	SCHOOL	POPULATION	PARTICIPANTS
1	School of Technical Education	19	15
2	School of Vocation Education	16	12

3	School of Sciences	32	27
4	School of Education	13	11
	Total	80	65 (81.25%)

Sources: Field Survey, December 2022

An online questionnaire was developed and sent to different platforms for respondents to respond to, after a week interval, a reminder was sent to the different platforms again. After a total of 2 weeks, only 65 (81.25%) of the 80 respondents had participated in the survey. Their responses are presented and analyzed below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 2: Information Access Tools Used by Academic Staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City

Options	Responses	Percentage (%)
Library	62	95.54
Search engines/Internet	65	100
Personal Collection	41	63.08
Ask colleagues	40	61.54
Databases	16	24.62
Others (interview, observation)	3	4.62

Sources: Field Survey, December 2022

62 of the respondents consult the library when they want to access information; all of them use search engines/internet; 41 use their personal collections; 40 resort to asking their colleagues; 16 use databases; while 3 use other access tools like observations and interviews. This finding agree with those of Bhattacharjee et al. (2014), who observed in their study that among a college library users, the single most vital access tool is the Internet for online access to e-resources, and this has become vital part of various information needs. Also, the research finding buttresses those of Thanuskodi (2012) who studied the information needs and information seeking behaviour of faculty members, and discovered that the access channels mainly used are personal collections, library, colleagues and bookstores.

Table 3: Information Sources Used by Academic Staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City

Primary Information Sources	Responses	Percentage (%)
Periodicals/Journals	57	87.7
Research works	55	84.62
Unpublished sources	18	27.7
Patents	4	6.15
Secondary Information Sources		
Reference materials	61	93.85
Abstract	35	53.85
Bibliography	19	29.23
Index	10	15.38
Tertiary Information Sources		
Dictionary	55	84.62
Manuals	49	75.38
Bibliography of bibliography	36	55.38
Chronologies	12	18.46
Automated Information Sources		
Internet	65	100
Audio-visuals	33	50.77
CD-ROM	12	18.46
Microforms	2	3.08

Sources: Field Survey, December 2022

On the primary sources of information 57 of the respondents consult periodicals/journals; 55 consult other research works; 18 use unpublished sources; and 4 use patents. For the secondary sources of information 61 of the respondents consult reference materials; 35 of them use abstracts; 19 use bibliographies; and 10 consult indexes. On the tertiary sources of information 55 of the respondents use dictionary; 49 consult manuals; 36 use

bibliography of bibliographies; while 12 of them use chronologies. On the automated sources of information, all the respondents (65) use the Internet; 33 of them use audio-visuals; 12 use CD-ROM; while 2 use microforms.

The findings of this study corroborate those of Okonoko, et. al (2021) who observed that among academic staff in a Nigerian College of Education, their preferred sources of information were majorly books, journals, internet sources, electronic resources, colleagues and friends, reference materials, other serials, association meetings, index and abstract, bibliographies, government documents/ websites, and academic software. The findings also agree with Ogunbodede and Oniovosa (2019) who showed in their study that majority of the academic staff in universities in Bayelsa State prefer to use e-resources and the internet as information sources.

Table 4: Search Strategies Used by Academic Staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor, Benin City

Options	Responses	Percentage (%)
Internet search	65	100
Discussion with colleagues	51	78.46
Seek help from a librarian	30	46.15
Manual library catalogue	20	30.77
OPAC search (Online library catalogue)	10	15.38

Sources: Field Survey, December 2022

All the respondents (65) adopts internet search when seeking information; 51 of them discuss with their colleagues; 30 seek help from a librarian; 20 consult manual library catalogues; and 10 resort to OPAC search. It also agrees with Bhattacharjee et al. (2014) who noted that search strategies used among a college library users are internet access, online resources, consulting with teachers, taking help from library staff, discuss with colleagues, consulting manual library catalogue search and through OPAC search. The findings are however at variance with Ogunbodede and Oniovosa (2019) who observed that lecturers in a Nigerian College of Education consult books, journals as their most preferred search strategies; internet/web pages only coming as the third most used option.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The academic staff of Federal College of Education (Technical) Ekiadolor are active seekers and users of information. Seeking information is no doubt a vital part of academic staff of a Technical College if they are to constantly keep an undated knowledge on the concepts that pertain to their fields. They often use the internet and consult the library when they try to access information; they consult journals/periodicals, reference materials, dictionaries and the internet to satisfy their information needs. Within the library however, they'd prefer to discuss with their colleagues before asking a librarian for information.

However, the following recommendations are made based on the research findings.

i. Academic libraries should be subscribed to e-databases, so that academic staff can have access to them always;

ii. Academic staffs should be trained to use databases, especially e-databases, as they are rich sources of recent and current information;

iii. Academic libraries should be provided with the different types of information sources, in order to efficiently serve the information needs of library users;

iv. Academic staff should be trained on how to use online library catalogues (OPAC), as it is the current trend replacing manual catalogues.

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