

Influence of Information Use on Academic Productivity of Lecturers in Babcock University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The quality of teaching, research and publications of lecturers depends on the quality of the information sources and services used by them. When quality information sources are available and lecturers put them to effective use, their work can improve. In spite of this, it is observed that lecturers do not maximally utilize information sources. As a result of this, there is under-productivity of some lecturers. It is in the light of this, that this study investigated information use and academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University. The study adopted a descriptive research design. A total enumerative sampling technique was used with research instrument tagged: "Information use and academic productivity questionnaire". Out of 209 copies of questionnaires distributed for data collection, only 148 of them were returned with 71 percent of response rate. The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between Information Sources Availability and Academic Productivity of lecturers ($r = .463^{**}$, $N = 148$, $P < .05$); significant relationship between Information Sources Utilization and Academic Productivity of lecturers ($r = .535^{**}$, $N = 148$, $P < .05$); and significant positive influence of information availability on lecturers information use ($r = .688^{**}$, $N = 148$, $P < .05$). As up-to-date, relevant and timely information sources are made available to lecturers; their academic productivity may keep on improving. This paper recommends therefore, that library administrators ensure that timely, relevant and up to date information sources are made available coupled with the modern information technology facilities for lecturers to use so that their academic productivity can be better.

Key words: information availability, information utilization, academic productivity, lecturers, information seeking behavior

Introduction

The quality of teaching, research and community service of lecturers coupled with their publication in any university system depend on the quality of information sources and services they use. Information availability, accessibility and use are very important to the teaching, research and community service activities of lecturers in the Nigerian university system. One of the critical factors used in determining academic productivity is research output. "Apart from competence in professional duties, research and publications are compulsory indices or indicators of assessment of academic productivity of lecturers" (Joyce 2006). Information plays a central role in achieving successful work performance of academic staff. Kim (2006) reported that academic staff information needs, information seeking behaviour and the relationship between information use and their work performance, by reviewing the types of information, the factors affecting information seeking of academic staff and role of information utilization on work performance of academic staff.

According to Kirk (2004) information use involves the development of documents in a variety of forms and formats. Information utilization can be seen as the effective use of information that is available. Maximum utilization of information could be affected by different kinds of factors that are related to the credibility of information sources and the validity of information packages. A major consideration in getting information is the quality of the information gathered from various sources. For instance, information from one source such as the internet can be verified by information from other sources, such as published literature and books. An academic staff's work performance would be based on the number of conference papers presented, patents, contributions to chapters in textbooks, number of graduates supervised by them, quality of teaching as measured by students, workshops and seminars conducted and the number of publications he has contributed to his field of knowledge.

A lecturer's role in his working environment and in the world of scholarly communication depends on the quality information he/she uses. He has multiple functions at his university. Firstly, he must be involved in teaching students and other researchers and by this he must have a high level of insight into his subject field. Many lecturers are also learners who are working towards higher qualifications. Secondly, the lecturer is an intellectual involved with creating, manipulating and using information. He is a central figure in the whole process of scholarly communication because he is the one that imparts knowledge into the students. The third is to conduct research. There are various sources of information that could be useful for academic staff use either for the purpose of lecturing their students or for personal reasons. Accessing these information sources may become a Herculean task if the sources are electronic-based and the user does not have the knowledge of how to use it.

The various roles and functions of lecturers give rise to information needs. In recent years, a great deal of research has been carried out on the needs of academics, researchers and scholars in universities and reports have that they relied heavily on personal collections, field work data, and grey literature (articles and information published without commercial purpose, especially on the internet) as major information sources. Very few new research or even replication of older studies have been done in Africa or elsewhere on information utilization and academic productivity of lecturers.

Lecturers need to update their knowledge base regularly by consulting information sources for research, publications, presenting papers, attending conferences and workshops, community services etc. These are all the responsibilities or duties of a lecturer. They are employed in a university environment based on their academic qualifications, character and commitment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to find out if information utilization could have any significant influence on the academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. find out the academic staffs' purpose/reason for utilizing information sources
2. identify the information needs of the academic staff in Babcock University
3. investigate the information sources that the academic staff in the university consult more frequently.
4. investigate the influence of information utilization on academic productivity of lecturers.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₁ Information availability has a significant influence on the academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University.

H₂ Information use has a significant influence on the academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University.

H₃ Information sources availability has a significant influence on information utilization of Babcock University lecturers.

Literature Review

Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) pointed out that, "information seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kind of information which is being sought and the ways and sources with which the needed information is being sought". Barriers that prevent individuals from seeking and getting information are also of great importance in understanding the information seeking behaviour of individuals and organizations. It is expressed in various forms, from reading printed materials to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopaedias, journals and more currently electronic media. Asemi (2005) mentioned that the frequency of use of the internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. At the same time, expenditures on monographs showed steady increase.

Some studies investigating the information seeking behaviour of scholars and academics have examined the role of the library in relation to other information providers. Guest (1987) in his study noted that 85 percent of the respondents relied on personal collection as a major source of information for teaching and research. He also found that librarians were rated lowest as a source for getting information. A decade after, Smith (1997) reported that about one-half of the respondents from Pennsylvania State University relied more on their personal collections and borrowing materials from other libraries.

Janike (as cited by Edem 1999:169) pointed out that the demand for a particular type of information often determines its availability. She further affirmed that providing information which could be made available is important since its demand for it is great. According to Popoola (2001:97) "information sources availability is the first step in communication" He also examined how researchers use social science information for decision making. The use of scientific information was found to be depending on the beliefs and interests of the academic staff and on the specific circumstances that shapes decision making process.

Chen and Hermon (as cited in Popoola, 2000:299) argued that "individuals, organizations or governments often find themselves where they must make decisions, answer questions, locate facts, solve problems and understand something. To minimize or eliminate doubt in the organization as well as the government, there is need for the provision of information" Information must be given and transferred by somebody or by some source of another

person or person or body through some channel and received by one person requiring or seeking information. There are various reasons why lecturers need information. Their work is centred on creating, using, manipulating and disseminating information to others who will in turn use and manipulate the information to create more information and knowledge.

One of the most frequently cited reasons why academics seek information relates to research projects. Popoola (2008) found that getting literature for their research needs is the most important reason why lecturers in higher institutions seek information. Lecturers consult different sources of information in order to teach students effectively (Popoola & Haliso, 2009) and, development of lecture notes, this makes lecturing exciting (Hiller 2005:162). Oduwale (2008: 55) submits that only 25 percent of lecturers in Nigerian universities make use of information for teaching purposes.

Lecturers all over the world are faced with constant pressure to publish their work in order to gain recognition both internationally and locally for their scholarship and this was found to be the case in Kemoni (2002) study of information needs of academics. Based on these findings, one may conclude that information is an important element in the working life of lecturers. Information utilization involves the development of documents in a variety of forms and formats: issues, papers and reports, training manuals and action plans, paper and electronic, analogue and digital, text based and image based, work-in-progress and final versions (Kirk, 2004). When data is structured and receives a purpose, it becomes information; it can then be expressed in documents and data.

Information is often used by academic staff to make decisions in relation to teaching and research for the achievement of the institutional goal. The use of information in the university by the academic staff has increased over the years. Nowadays, there is a huge demand for planning support systems that cooperate with the management of information of the universities. Academic staff regard information as useful if presented to them in reasonably aggregated formats, in a timely manner and cover sufficient scope in terms of future time horizons. But the relevance of the information characteristic depends on and should be adapted to the contexts within which these academic staff have to operate (Case 2002).

Okiy (2007:59) reported that students and Faculty members in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, made use of the newspapers, journals, textbooks, magazines, projects, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and government documents. Moreover, Popoola, (2001:300) found that academic social scientists in the Nigerian universities utilized the following library information services: current awareness, photocopying, referencing, statistical data analysis, email, selective dissemination of information and online database searching in support of their research output. Kemoni (2002:76) studied the utilization of archival information by researchers in the University of Nairobi, Kenya and found that they utilized maps and atlases, gazettes, theses and dissertations, newspapers, statistical abstracts, video films, political record books, journals and conference papers. Ojedokun and Owolabi (2003:49) investigated internet access competence and use for teaching and research activities by University of Botswana academic staff. Ojo- Ade and Jagboro (2005:184) found that academic staff in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, used subject catalogues to locate and retrieve the needed information materials. The use of relevant and timely information is likely to enhance academic output of lecturers. No wonder Popoola and Haliso (2009:74) reported that the use of information sources could help lecturers to carryout innovative studies, which in turn make them (lecturers) support their communities through research and development. Academic productivity according to Kaniki (2003:150) is "the efficiency with which lecturers perform their multiple responsibilities of learning (product of teaching), knowledge and scholarship (the product of research and other scholarly activities) institutional, community and professional well-being (the products of shared governance, community service and professional activities)". Ensuring academic productivity is critical for survival in today's highly competitive tertiary education environment. It has the major aim of bringing about lasting improvements in performance of faculty members.

Methodology

Survey method was used for the study. The study population were the academic staff of Babcock University, Ogun State Nigeria. The study adopted a total enumeration method called CENSUS to include all teaching staff of the university. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 209 staff of the university and 148 of them responded with 71 percent response rate.

Result

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

S/N	Category	Frequency	percentage
Gender	Female	55	37.2
	Male	93	62.8
Age (in years)	25-34	30	20.3
	35-44	61	41.2
	45-54	43	29.1
	55 and above	14	9.5
Academic Qualification	PhD	91	61.5
	Postdoctoral	6	4.1
	Masters Degree	30	20.3
	Bachelors Degree	21	14.2
Rank	Professor	45	30.0
	Reader	22	15
	Senior Lecturer	25	17
	Lecturer I	19	12.
	Lecturer II	15	10.1
	Assistant Lecturer	13	8.7
	Graduate Assistants	9	6.0

Out of the 148 respondents, 37percent of them are female academics while 62 percent of them are male. 61 percent of the respondents hold Ph,D; 20 percent holds Mastter degrees ; 14 percent of them hold a bachelor degrees while 4 percent are of a postdoctoral. 10 percent of them are professors; 15 percent of them are Readers; 17 percent Senior lecturers;12 percent Lecturer I; 10 percent LecturerII; 8 percent Assistant Lecturers and finally, 6 percent of them are Graduate Assistants.

Hypothesis Testing

H₁ Information availability has a significant influence on the academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University.

Table 2 Influence of information availability on academic productivity

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Information Sources Availability	34.37	7.62	148	.463**	.000	sig.
Productivity of Teachers	87.45	24.15				

It is shown in the above table that there was a positive relationship between Information Sources Availability and Academic Productivity of lecturers ($r = .463^{**}$, $N= 148$, $P < .05$). From the table, Availability of Information had influenced positively the Productivity of the Teachers in the study. Therefore, hypothesis one is accepted.

H₂ Information use has a significant influence on the academic productivity of lecturers

Table 3 Influence of information use on academic productivity of Lecturers

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Information Source Utilization	55.17	12.78	148	.535**	.000	sig.
Productivity of Lecturers	87.45	24.15				

It is shown in the above table that there was significant relationship between Information Sources Utilization and Academic Productivity of Lecturers ($r = .535^{**}$, $N= 148$, $P < .05$). From the table, Utilization of Information had

influenced positively the Productivity of the Lecturers in the study. Hypothesis two is accepted.
 H3 Information sources availability has a significant influence on information sources utilization

Influence of information availability on information utilization

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Information sources availability	34.37	7.62	148	.688**	.000	sig.
Information Sources Utilization	55.17	12.78				

It is shown in the above table that there was significant relationship between Information Sources Availability and Information Sources Utilization ($r = .688^{**}$, $N = 148$, $P < .05$).

From the table, Availability of Information had influenced positively the Information Utilization of the Teachers in the study. This finding agrees that of Haliso & Okunfulure (2010) findings where they stated that information availability ensures its utilization as what is not available cannot be utilized.

Implication of Findings

The findings reveal that 62.8% of the sampled population were male while 37.2% were female. This implies that there are more male lecturers than females in Babcock University. They also reveal that 61 of the 148 respondents are aged between 35 and 44 this implies that majority of the lecturers are within this age bracket. 79.1% of the respondents are married implying that majority of the staff are married. The findings also reveal that 38.5% of the academic staff are senior lecturers implying that majority are senior lecturers. The findings also reveal that 61.5% are Masters Degree holders. This implies that majority have Masters Degree as their highest degree. 52 of the 148 respondents belong to the school of science and technology. This implies that the school of science and technology holds the largest number of lecturers.

More than half of the respondents agree that all the information sources listed in table 4.1 are available. This implies that their information needs are being met. Also all the information sources listed in table 4.2 were seen as being utilized by the academic staff. This implies that the available information materials are being utilized.

The findings reveal that keeping up with current developments in their field was rated highest as the reason why lecturers consult information sources and personal enjoyment the last reason. This implies that the main reason why lecturers consult information sources is to keep up with current developments in their field. The findings also reveal that lack of time for searching is the main challenge faced by lecturers. This implies that lecturers don't have enough time on their hands for information seeking.

The findings also reveal that journals were rated highest in having an influence on lecturers' productivity. This implies that journals have the most influence on lecturers' academic productivity. Attendance at seminars, workshops and conferences were rated the highest in being influenced by information utilisation. While participation in these programmes was rated the lowest. This implies that lecturers attend seminars, workshops and conferences but they don't present papers or conduct them neither do they have a high level of publication status.

The three hypotheses were accepted at the end of the study, this implies that there is a relationship between information use and academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University.

Conclusion

The conclusion from this study will mainly be based on the research questions and hypothesis formulated for the work. The needed information materials are available to lecturers in Babcock University. The available materials are being utilized by the lecturers in Babcock University. The challenges faced by these lecturers while seeking information are lack of time for searching and too many classes or administrative work. The lecturers' purposes of consulting these information sources are to keep up with current developments in their field and to prepare for lectures. There is a significant influence of information use and availability on the academic productivity of lecturers and also a relationship between information availability and utilization. Library administrators should ensure that timely, relevant and up-to-date information sources are made available coupled with the modern information technology facilities for lecturers to use so that their academic productivity can even be better. More academic staff could be employed to take the workload off the lecturers since majority of them say they have too many classes or administrative work. Study leaves with or without pay should be granted to the lecturers by the institution to further enhance their development. The research culture of Babcock University should be greatly improved upon, by creating research opportunities such as funding and resource availability. Lecturers should

put more effort into participating and contributing to seminars, workshops and conferences by presenting more papers and writing more journal articles.

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