

Library And Information Services Provision In E-Learning Environment

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Being a paper presented During The Federal University of Lafia's Symposium Series Held on Wednesday 21st June, 2023.

Introduction

It is a fact that before the advent Information and Communication Technology(ICT) in the mid-1980s access to education is basically through physical attendance at classes of whatever nature where both the teacher and the students meet to present the lesson and the students learn from it. In most cases, library and information resources are commonly in printed formats. In effect therefore, physical class and library attendance are highly necessary. What an undemocratic approach to education, learning and utilisation of library and information resources and services. Classes attendance are being recorded and marks are awarded for the attendance. To a large extent, it could be argued that this methodology of education system is restrictive to only those who are willing, capable and able to attend school and classes physically. Thus, in that circumstance, it can rightly be said that teaching and learning dominantly take place physically.

In like manner, library and information services before the mid-1980s, are dominantly provided in physical regime where the customer has to be in the library to enjoy it. In effect, the information resources of libraries and information centres such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, etc. are more often than not in printed formats. Some of the other types of information resources scarcely available are in audio-visuals formats such as films, slides, cassettes recordings, CD. ROMs etc. In the same manner, access to and utilisation of library and information services such as reference and information services, circulation services, readers' advisory services etc. are similarly restrictive to mostly the customers who are capable and able to be physically present in libraries and information centres.

The democratisation or rather, the liberalisation of access to education and particularly through the exploitation of the potentials of online or distance learning systems of teaching and learning are by-products of the acceptance and application of the Internet technology with its associated facilities and resources such as the ICTs, network systems and platforms, the social media, as well as other types of digital resources, systems and services in human endeavours of all sorts. Thus, acquisition of requisite education, skills and competences have mostly become unrestrictive as against only through the physical appearance of the candidates in the designated environments. This has led to the emergence of educational systems models such as: Open and Distance Learning (ODL), E-Learning (EL), Online Learning (OL), Distance Learning (DL), etc. especially by higher educational institutions who consequently established Learning Centres to provide the required educational and training services. It can thus be argued that distance learning is a mode/methodology of delivering education and instruction to students located at wherever who are not physically present in a traditional class room settings. In these types of arrangements, the physical location of the candidates engaged/enrolled in the education and training programmes, irrespective of the level and the domicile of the education institution, is immaterial and is of no consequence. This move suggests and confirms that candidates can be at anywhere around the globe to enroll for educational programmes of choice without hitches as the issue of space/distance and time is less significant. In effect therefore, even candidates with some physical challenges are easily included/enrolled in such educational programmes provided they are able and willing to reasonably utilise their limbs to some extent to do so. In essence, the basic objective of such distance learning educational systems can be said to provide flexible, cost effective and functional educational opportunities to qualified candidates to obtain quality lifelong values to be productive in the society. Some of the teaching and learning platforms mostly used for distance education, information and other services delivery by Learning Centres of the respective institutions concerned include : Learning Management Systems (LMS), E-Counselling Management Systems (CMS), Project Administration System (PAS), E-exams Application System (EAS), E-Tutor Marked Assignment System (TMA), Result Management System (RMS), etc. Essentially, it can be conceived that the Distance Learning Platforms are more or less Web-based applications developed and deployed online, though sometimes offline but in real time processing regime. It is generally observed that such systems are reliable, cost effective, efficient and easily accessible by both the teachers and students. To a large extent, it can be

argued that the choice of the type of distance learning platforms adopted and utilised is dependent upon the policy of the institution concerned.

Library and Information Services Provisions

In line with the spirit and expectations of distance learning educational systems, library and information systems and services provisions have to be creative and flexible especially in terms of the types of information resources (printed and non-printed/digital) and services (resident and non-resident) delivery. This requires that libraries and information centres for distance learning have to take on the advantages of ICTs to effectively and efficiently utilise the myriad potentials of the Internet and other relevant types of ICTs and network systems to meet up to the expectations of distance learning. In effect therefore, and depending on the vision, mission and objectives of the distance learning institutions and their libraries and information centres, it is necessary for them to have bi-modal/hybrid setup with critical operational and services infrastructural facilities very useful for teaching, learning and research. What is critically needed are varieties of electronic information resources and indeed services to meet the varying needs of the stakeholders irrespective of their physical locations and times/periods of needs. Some of the electronic information resources libraries and information centres for E-Learning/Distance Learning environment should averagely possess include:

- ❖ e- books, e-journals,
- ❖ online CD-ROM databases,
- ❖ electronic archives,
- ❖ massive online open courseware (MOOC),
- ❖ e-theses and dissertations,
- ❖ e-news and e-magazines,
- ❖ e-maps, etc.

Other very related electronic information resources and services also needed in E-learning/Distance Learning libraries and information centres include:

- Library Management System
- Library website/portal
- Active Internet connectivity
- Automated Library Network and Intranet
- Library Open Access Catalogue (OPAC)
- Online Indexes and indexing Services
- Printed and non-printed/digital information resources

- Automated/digital/institutional/Library Repository
- Online Reference and Information resources and Services
- Online Databases and Services
- Online Circulation System and Services
- Generator/Inverter Light backup Services
- Online Synchronous and Asynchronous Systems and Services
- Audio and Visual information Resources/facilities and Services
- Social Media Platforms and Services
- Provision of periodic in-house training for both staff and students to enhance their e-skills and competences
- Photocopier and Scanner
- Computer sets and requisite software

It can be argued that the development of electronic information resources is one of the most serious attractive expansive mode in the attempts to effectively access and utilise information among scholars and indeed the students too. By and large, the effective access and utilisation of e-information resources can be said to be a by-product of the nature of the e-resources availability, as well as the state of ICT infrastructure prevalence in the service environment. To this end, Dadzie (2015) argued that the importance of e-resources include access to information that would have been restricted to the user due to geographical boundaries or finance, access to current information and provision of extensive links to additional resources whenever users need them. However, it can be argued that electronic resource is an all embracing term that involves varieties publishing formats such as wireless publishing, e-books, print-on-demand (POD), electronic link and web publishing, e-mail publishing, e-journals. Also, e-resources can be referred to as any technology that communicates a wide range of data whether it is in text or numerical. Similarly, Haridasan and Khan (2019) are of the view that electronic resources consist of materials that are computer-controlled, including materials that required the use of a peripheral (e.g. a CD-ROM Player) attached to a computer, the items may or not be used in the interactive mode.

By and large, in order to ensure and enhance effective and efficient information resources and services delivery, E-Learning/Distance Learning libraries and information centres should as much as possible be devoid of strategic challenges such as:

- non-availability of active Internet connectivity,

- lack of provision for non- interrupted e-information resources and services delivery,
- lack of provisions for abrogation of language barriers,
- lack of provision for periodic systems and services reviews/evaluation,
- provision for non-interrupted electricity power supply,
- lack of conducive environments for resident and non-resident systems and services customers,
- lack of effective control of multiple log in by end-users,
- lack of effective methodology for information and resources sharing,
- multiple Website hosting and domain registration,
- applications updating and maintenance complexities,
- duplication of records,
- non-harmonisation of application outcomes,
- undue delay in systems/applications upgrades/updates,
- high operational costs of systems,
- conflicts of interests between/among staff and students, etc.

Concluding Remarks.

Attempts have been made to highlight the state of the provision of education as well as library and information resources and services before, during and after the steady emergence and application of ICTs to democratise and liberalise easy access to education as well as to information resources and services. It is thus concluded that the viable option available for effective and efficient access and utilisation of the potentials of education acquisition as well as of library and information resources and services is to steadily embrace, apply and utilise relevant types of ICTs from all dimensions irrespective of place and time.

References:

- Dadzie, P.S. (2015) Electronic Resources: Access and Usage at Ashei University College *Campus Wide Information Systems*, 22(5):290-297.
- Haridasan, S & Khan, M (2019). Impact of E-Resources by Social Scientists in National Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC) India. *The Electronic Library*, 27(1)117-133.